



Art Repro C°

RICHARD REECE.

AT THE AGE OF 32.

FATHER REECE

The Old Methodist Minister

TWICE
PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE

BY

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WITH PORTRAITS

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PREFACE

DURING his long life "Father Reece" was highly honoured by the great religious community to which he belonged. Some memorial of him might therefore be looked for; and his only son, the late Richard Marsden Reece, might doubtless have been the most fitting biographer. But if any design of this kind existed, it was unfulfilled; while the lapse of long years has now increased the difficulty of the task.

These pages are written mainly that the descendants of Father Reece may know what manner of man he was. It seemed that the sketch might be essayed by a grandson who was with him constantly during the decade (1840–1850) preceding his death. Relying on personal recollections, the writer has also derived important aid from various old almanacks or diaries, and old letters. Most of these have been kindly lent by the Misses Dora and Kate Reece, two of the granddaughters.

Father Reece, for so he was generally called during the last period of his life, may not have been in the world's estimation a great, or even a very prominent man. But his life-history, beginning as it did with the call by John Wesley himself, was not destitute of incidents more or less interesting to this generation. Above all, he was emphatically a good man; and the life of a truly good man, if faithfully sketched, must be worthy of attention.

Such men are always scarce. Absolutely just, upright, and single-minded: exercising for good

much influence over others : indifferent to what the world has to offer : bent only on the “Master’s business”—such was the record for sixty years and more.

Although this sketch is designed chiefly for the descendants and the remoter relatives of Father Reece, very few of whom can remember him, other objects have been kept in view:—

1. An outline is given of that old-fashioned Methodism which prevailed in Father Reece’s day, and which did not altogether resemble the Methodism of the century’s end.

2. The relations existing prior to 1850, and now modified, between the Methodist of the original Connexion and the Church of England, are touched on incidentally.

3. Features peculiar to the Methodist system, and due mainly to Wesley’s own foresight and wisdom, receive attention. They may perhaps interest Church people also, as they may be compared with the corresponding details in the daily work of the Church of England. Knowledge of this kind may prove helpful, especially to those who, as “Church Reformers,” are intelligently striving to improve Church machinery.

The title “Reverend” is omitted from the text, as its constant repetition might be tedious—it appears in the List of Presidents—Appendix III.

Every exertion has been made to reproduce faithfully the three old and scarce prints which portrayed Father Reece at the ages of 32, 60, and 75.

Some of the questions touched on, such as that involving the origin and government of Christian Churches, are not free from difficulty—they are questions on which much has been written, and will yet be written, by theologians. The writer has endeavoured to keep to an attitude of impartiality, conscious that his readers will value the narrative rather than the opinions of the narrator.

KENSINGTON,
September, 1899.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

CHESHIRE a century since was nothing but an agricultural county. Other counties had their peculiar merits and their special products, but the rich land on the banks of the Dee and Mersey, almost within sight of Welsh mountains, only claimed a high repute for cattle, cheese, and ample crops. Other localities may have given birth to statesmen, writers, philosophers; but Cheshire is content to show a list of stalwart soldiers, such as the Cottons and Egertons, and a longer list of no less stalwart agriculturists. Were this the place to discuss the “Making of England”—to use the modern phrase—it might be argued that this small county has by no means fallen short in the momentous work.

Cheshire, like most counties of rich agricultural land, is flat compared with others. Yet there are a few richly wooded hills here and there. Two of these are found near to Tarporley, and they impart to that old-world little town an added interest. Not far from Tarporley is the hamlet of Tarvin, and there may be found the large farm with quaint gabled farmhouse called Brereton Park. Several generations of Reeces had lived there; but when many years ago the present writer went to explore the place, the only visible sign of their long occupation was a gable-end enclosing a square, flat stone let into the brickwork, and inscribed—R. R.—1717. Richard married a Miss Houghland, and he was the father of John, who married a Miss Hodson, of Christlington, and was the father of Richard Reece, to whose memory these pages are dedicated, and who was born on the 1st of December, 1765. The Reece family is of course deemed to be of Welsh origin; but whether Dr. Gregory, while writing a short newspaper sketch of Richard Reece, had sufficient reason for tracing their lineage to the princely family of Rhys, the writer will not venture to say. Whether or not

the Reeces were of that ancient and noble family may not be with certainty known. But to a certainty they were known far and wide for size and strength of frame and dignity of manner. The author of a book on Cheshire, published more than sixty years ago, placed it on record that "Mr. John Reece and his sons were amongst the finest men in the county."

Richard Reece was the eldest, and he had several brothers who passed their lives in Cheshire or near to it. The only brother well known to the present writer was Joseph, who lived a long and honoured life at Tarporley. On his retirement from medical practice he received a costly service of silver plate as a testimonial from the people of a wide district, headed by the Egertons and Tollemaches.

All the Reeces are believed to have been healthy, robust, and long-lived. The father and mother of Richard Reece lived to a great age, and are buried in the churchyard of St. John's at Chester. It is a large place, and full of tombstones, and search has in vain been made for their memorial, though it is certainly there. He used to speak of his "Aunt Sefton," who attained to ninety-five

years and more. Richard Reece knew nothing of serious illness, and, like most of his kith and kin, he died of old age.

So much for the Reece family, of whom the records are now scanty ; but the object being to sketch only one of their number, there need be little further reference to the old home, which Richard Reece seems to have re-visited once a year after he had finally given up his life to the work of the Christian ministry. The preparation for this was necessarily much slighter in the days of Wesley than it now is. There was no theological college, and the young preachers were expected in their few hours of leisure to study diligently. Richard Reece seems to have been at the school of a Mr. Hobrow, himself a local preacher at Chester, who took him to the "Octagon chapel." At this Chester school he probably learnt some Latin and Greek ; and certainly he kept up his studies long after his schooldays were over, and acquired some insight into French and Hebrew.

Returning from school to Brereton Park, he at first intended to follow the ancestral pursuits ; but his thoughts were diverted from this at the age of eighteen, when he

began to think upon and to value the “things of the spirit,” and to disregard the things of the world. Here occurred the great change which he described as “the new birth,” or spiritual regeneration. Guidance he found at the hands of some of Wesley’s preachers, who came to Tarvin from time to time, when a congregation was gathered. A usual place of meeting was a very large kitchen, probably the oldest and the most spacious room at Brereton Park. Richard Reece in the year 1787 finally chose his vocation, or, rather, had it chosen for him by a higher power. He went over to Manchester at a time when John Wesley himself was to be found and consulted ; but no record of these interviews can be traced. He was at once approved and commissioned by the patriarch, and sent to Oxford, where the “circuit” was then immense and the labourers few. His senior was Mr. Entwistle, who became President and lived to a great age. It may be noted that Wesley from the first sent out no preacher alone—they went two, or even three, together to a circuit.*

* This was done of set purpose. Wesley wrote : “ I cannot advise any person to go alone. Our Lord sent His disciples two and two ” (Tyerman, vol. iii. p. 401).

The system, as is well known, was one of strict “itinerancy.” Wesley’s preachers were, at their Annual Conference, appointed to spheres of work called circuits, then very large, but now much subdivided. They might be re-appointed, and often were ; but two years appears to have been the usual time for residing in any one city or town. Later on three years became in ordinary cases the customary term, and to this day the system prevails.

Richard Reece we find in 1788 at the Conference in London, when he was appointed to Norwich. We find him in 1790 moving to Wakefield, in 1792 to Bolton, and in 1793 to Guernsey.

In that island he kept up correspondence with old friends, and made new ones ; and it is probable that here he took up the study of the French language and the sermons of Bourdaloue, Bossuet and Massillon—these, and especially the latter,* had great attraction for him for the rest of his life. These books were on his shelves in brown and ancient octavo volumes. Sometimes, on suddenly entering his study, I found him

* Jean Baptiste Massillon, born at Hyères 1663, Bishop of Clermont, died 1742.

standing (his favourite attitude) and reading aloud from one of the great preachers of the Gallican Church. Whether his pronunciation was that of Paris or of "Stratford-atte-Bow" I was not qualified to judge; but his love for those old French preachers was beyond any doubt.

To resume the narrative, I find an old letter dated from Halifax, November, 1793, which contains some interesting passages. It is addressed to Mr. Reece, "at Mrs. Arrivé's in the Isle of Guernsey"; and being a single sheet closely written, the postage was only tenpence.

This (the earliest letter addressed to Mr. Reece which can be found) may have been preserved because it fully describes a remarkable "revival" at Halifax. There were prayer meetings prolonged far into the night, at which there was much confusion, as there was "crying, praying, and rejoicing all at the same time." The writer said that he was in perplexity, "had acted the part of a watchman," and was fearful about consequences; but neither he nor his colleague, Charles Atmore, dare discourage what appeared to be a deeply spiritual movement. They determined, after

much anxious thought, to have “more regularity,” and that the meetings should break up earlier. Toward the close of the letter are two passages in Hebrew, which possibly may refer to a certain Mary Barker, “truly sensible and deeply pious,” and the writer touchingly adds, “I hope God will give her to me.” Finally he begs that this matter may not be talked about, and that he may soon have a letter, and subscribes himself, “Yours most affectionately, Robert Lomas.”*

Also I find a bundle of many old letters addressed to Mr. Reece by an intimate friend of his, M. du Pontavice. They range from 1794 to 1803, and are all in French except the last. The writer was an *émigré* who had to take refuge for many years on British soil, and appears to have become a convert and a preacher. Finally he returned to France and rejoined his “beloved parents,” whom he had not seen for many years; but it seems that they disapproved of the course he had adopted in religious matters, and of his efforts to do good to the people of some adjoining parishes in France which I cannot

* This is probably the “Brother Lomas” whose death at Bristol is recorded in an Almanack for 1810.

identify. He intimates that caution is necessary in letter-writing, as letters were opened and read by the authorities. This will account for the use of initials, instead of names, in such of the letters as were written from France. He writes rather despondently, and subscribes himself "With affection your brother in Christ Jesus, P. du Pontavice."*

* Nothing further is heard of this correspondent. It is an existing name in France, now borne by one of the staff of the French Embassy.

CHAPTER II

ITINERANCY IN ENGLAND

IN 1795 Mr. Reece was for a short time at Manchester. We find him in the following year the junior preacher at Wesley's Chapel in the City Road, the senior being the eminent Mr. John Pawson, whose name figures often in the early annals of Methodism. Mr. Pawson, who is mentioned in Wesley's Journal of 1767 and 1781, must have been a middle-aged man when the patriarch "set apart" or ordained him and sent him to preach in Scotland. Mr. Pawson's complaint that on his return he lost this promotion and had to conform to the usages of the general body of preachers, "without gown or bands," may be remembered.*

In 1793 Mr. Pawson was President of the Conference, and as such he signed the famous

* See Tyerman, vol. iii. p. 497.

address to the societies describing at length what is truly called a “dilemma,” caused by a demand from many places for sacramental services. The conclusion was this: where the demand was unmistakable, there might be administration by the preachers in the evening. The address carefully explains that the “people had forced” the Conference into this “further deviation from the Church of England.” Yet the societies generally were entreated to maintain their connection with the Church. Mr. Pawson and Dr. Coke signed this important manifesto, as President and Secretary.

In 1796 Mr. Pawson was residing as senior preacher in the City Road house, when a curious thing happened. He became possessed of a large number of memoranda, letters, &c., of Wesley’s. It is impossible to say how or wherefore—for he was not one of Wesley’s executors. Many of these MSS. he threw away, literally, as waste paper. Mr. Reece rescued some of them from destruction and they passed into the hands of his children and grandchildren. A few of the Wesley MSS. were treated with more distinction, especially two letters which are wholly in the handwriting of Dr. Johnson,

and of William Pitt. These two are amongst the present writer's choice possessions ; and on each is endorsed a note written by Mr. Reece to the effect that it was " given to him by Mr. Pawson in 1796."*

But a more important event marked the year 1796. In June Mr. Reece married Hannah, the daughter of Mr. William Marsden, of Manchester. The Marsdens are an ancient family of Chelmorton, a village on a mountain-side in the Peak district of Derbyshire ; and many of their tombs may there be seen, and their old stone house, grey and green, is still owned by their lineal descendant. Hannah Marsden came as a bride, however, not from the old home of her race, but from Manchester, where her father was a man of some importance, and a host with whom Wesley liked to stay. One day, perhaps about the year 1785, the patriarch, whose dislike to gay clothing was well known, had his attention called to little Hannah's costume. Although strict in theory he had much of human kindness, and he refused to

* Pitt's letter is uninteresting. Johnson's is very racy and contains an elaborate compliment to Wesley. It is printed in Croker's " Boswell's Johnson " under 1776.

find fault with the child. "She looks very nice," said he, perhaps inconsistently. Hannah was never very talkative; would that she had handed down more of her early recollections. She did, however, say that when a certain worthy citizen came to see her father he was often accompanied by his "little son Jabez," who afterwards became Doctor Bunting, a ruling spirit in Methodism from about the year 1820 to 1850, and of whom more will be said hereafter.

Young Mr. and Mrs. Reece inhabited an upper floor of Wesley's house, then 23, and now 47, City Road; and it is a coincidence that they re-entered the house in 1840, and that Mrs. Reece died there. Hannah Reece was an only daughter, and she had three brothers. . . . John was a merchant and lived at Manchester; William was a B.D. of Oxford and long held the important living of Eccles, Lancashire; George became a Methodist minister, Mission Secretary, and in 1821 and 1831 president of the Conference. William and George reached a great age and were old-fashioned in their dress and manners. In their conversation, although one was very humorous and the other very solemn, both were quaint and interesting.

Hannah Reece, their only sister, had regular features, an oval face, and blue eyes. Her only wish was to pursue piously and humbly "the daily round, the common task," with self-denial and constant devotion. Dying in the year 1843 she was long remembered with affection ; and even now there are a few who can call to mind this true "mother in Israel."

In 1797 the senior preacher in each circuit was for the first time called "Superintendent." The *Arminian* (now *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*) of that year contains a notable portrait of Mr. Reece well engraved by Ridley, and in short a fair work of art. The hair is evenly parted, and flows down to the shoulders, as the fashion then was. In 1799 we find him at Macclesfield, where his daughter Mary was born ; the eldest (Eliza) died in girlhood. Macclesfield was a place of importance in those days, as readers of the Wesley Journals know. David Simpson was on close terms of intimacy with the Methodists. There at least Church and Chapel were on the very best of terms, with no chasm to divide them ; and perhaps for this reason Wesley loved Macclesfield. Among the principal adherents were the Ryles, ancestors of the venerable Bishop of

Liverpool. Christ Church, Macclesfield, was built in 1775 for Mr. Simpson, who was incumbent there up to the time of his death in 1799. The Methodists doubtless attended his church in the morning, according to old Methodist usage. His funeral sermon was preached by Mr. Reece, for there had been a close friendship between them.

I do not propose to trace in order all Mr. Reece's various removals from circuit to circuit, for it might be tedious. Amongst them were Leeds (twice), Birmingham, Bath (twice), Southwark (twice), London (various parts), Rochester, and Sheffield. But a few words on that system of itinerancy, which involves so many changes of abode, may not be amiss. Wesley had a strong opinion that a frequent change in the spheres of work was good alike for ministers and for people; and he made it a law of his Connexion that a minister may not remain more than three years in the same sphere or circuit. It is true that a limited number of the ministers escape from itinerancy, being appointed to secretaryships, tutorships, or other resident duties; and amongst these have been at various times many of the more eminent men. But for one minister who holds what

may be called a staff-appointment there are (now as formerly) some fifty who move to another place after two, or at the outside three, years. In Mr. Reece's time nobody complained of this system ; and he certainly submitted without a murmur to the trouble of moving, by coach and waggon, his family and his library of books from town to town. There was little or no moving of furniture, for the incoming minister expected to find a modestly-furnished and comfortable house ready for his reception. Herein his lot is happier than that of many a rector or vicar, to say nothing of freedom from dilapidations, fees, firstfruits, and other legal and vexatious claims. The details of money matters and local business the Methodist system wisely places on the local "stewards." The chief objections to the system of itinerancy we may take to be as follows : that a minister loses some time in getting to know the people ; that he must leave them too soon after he has secured their friendship ; that he cannot have the satisfaction of watching the growth and development of their children ; that frequent changes are apt to be rather unsettling to the minds of both the teacher and the taught.

On the other hand it may be urged that there is a kind of freemasonry in Methodism which ensures that the new minister shall feel at home in a few weeks ; nor does it follow that such friendships are wholly severed by removal. But above all the tinerant minister has the great advantage of using again his old sermon-notes, and so keeping up the due supply of “things new and old.” Without a change of sphere it would be impossible to preach three times on a Sunday, as Mr. Reece did habitually—so many new sermons could not have been prepared. He often “met the Society” after the evening service, and preached on a week-day evening, in addition. Written sermons were unknown ; and Mr. Reece’s sermon-notes, in a peculiar mixture of long- and shorthand, barely occupied a single sheet. Now and then a special sermon might be wanted for an anniversary or a funeral ; but usually the outline or sketch of an old discourse was available again and again. Any one who has repeated a lecture or address knows that it ought to improve on each reproduction. As a fact those of Mr. Reece’s contemporaries who were noted as preachers were well known to have a few

sermons of rare excellence, which were constantly improving, and these sermons were eagerly looked for. It is unnecessary to add that the identity of the discourse lay in the framework or outline, and by no means in the language, for the latter an able and fluent preacher or lecturer will vary to any extent. Our present topic is the specific advantage of the system of itinerancy ; and this system, which now finds many opponents, must on the whole be adjudged to be distinctly favourable, alike to the preacher and to the congregation. Whether the statutory term of three years might not with advantage be extended to five is quite another question.

Drawbacks there evidently were, the most obvious being the tedious journeys, before the days of the railway. Mr. Reece did not complain ; perhaps the change of scene once in two years or three—the migration always being in the summer—had some of the beneficial effects of a holiday trip. The packing and unpacking of luggage, which included five or six large chests of books, was a troublesome item, as also their removal by waggon. The inconveniences of the itinerant's life he accepted without a murmur

or sixty years—that is to say, from his first appointment in 1787 to his final retirement in 1846.

His almanack notes for 1808 give more than the usual amount of information. He was stationed at Bath, and seems to have resided in King Street, which in the winter of that year was flooded from the river Avon. In March there was a curious dispute. Mr. Pocock insisted in putting up an organ in a chapel (then forbidden by the Conference *), and three carpenters were hard at work, when James Wood and Richard Reece appeared on the scene. There was a violent altercation "on Mr. P.'s side," but finally the work was dropped.

The duty at Bath was heavy, three sermons at three different villages on Sunday being not unusual. The painful death is mentioned on the 28th of May of Mr. Bradford, an old companion of John Wesley, who had been President in 1795 and 1803. Mr. James Wood made the arrangements for the coming Conference, and was nervous as to finding hospitality for all who desired

* This rule of the Conference was years afterwards repealed.

to attend it. Finally this and other difficulties were got over, and the Conference met at Bristol on the 27th of July, when Mr. Wood was appointed for the second time President, and (says the Journal) "Dr. Coke Secretary as usual." There were at this Conference letters from Adam Clarke, and a discussion about him, as he had accepted work in London under Government, on the old Records, and had other literary engagements; so the Conference removed his name from the effective list. References to public affairs are few, but it is noted that the people of Spain, "headed by their nobility," had risen "against the usurpation of Bonaparte," whose army occupied Madrid.

There is a note in his Almanack of 1810 that Mr. Reece was continuing in London another year, "contrary to his wishes." In August, after the Conference was over, the whole party went to Windsor, and saw the King, Queen, and three royal Princesses on the terrace. Next morning they saw George III., "the oldest king in the world and the best," at the Castle Chapel—"fervent in his devotions, but his sight was entirely gone."

In 1813 Mr. Reece was again stationed in

London, and his Sunday's work from June to September of that year is exactly shown by an old print entitled "A Plan for the Preachers in the London West and Brentford Circuits." There appear in it some well-known names —Clarke, Newton, and Benson, the latter being just then the most influential name in Methodism. The other two were rather younger men, and they formed part of the group who may be said to have ruled the Connexion after Benson died. Of this group the leading spirit was of course Dr. Jabez Bunting, whose singular abilities were such as to exclude any notion of rivalry. From the literary point of view Dr. Clarke and R. Watson would be set in the front rank; but as business manager and organiser Dr. Bunting stood first. Next to him, and for some twenty years, Richard Reece was by some competent judges considered to exercise the greatest influence over the brethren.

In the March of 1816 Mr. Reece, who then resided in Oldham Street, Manchester, went over to Sheffield to preach twice for the schools "containing upwards of 1,880 children and adults." The handbill has been preserved, and it is a curiosity, for it

contains at least one hymn * by James Montgomery, whose honoured name also appears at the foot, as the printer of the bill. This poet, who has left several master-pieces of sacred verse, conducted, and probably owned, a journal at Sheffield, which, like many country journals, had a printing office attached. As a Moravian he had much sympathy with the Connexion which Wesley had founded, and he did the printing for the Sheffield Methodists.

Just before and after the time of Mr. Reece's first presidency there was a great movement to extend the Foreign Missions. Of this there are many notes in his remaining Journals. Methodist Missions were founded for the most part by Dr. Coke, a chosen friend of Wesley's later days, and had existed for many years. The time had now come to organise and put new life into these missions, and the leading men in the Connexion took up this work with very great energy. To a certain extent funds had been raised (Dr. Coke was a large contributor), and there were missionaries in various parts

* "When Jesus left His Father's Throne," in Palmer's Book of Praise.

of the world. What was done in 1813 and in the years following was to constitute and equip a powerful society, working through an executive in London and aided by systematic preaching tours, which should strengthen and extend all these missionary operations. Meetings were held, and special sermons were preached all through England. An address in the form of a four-page tract lies before me, printed in Leeds without date, but issued in 1813, which sums up the history of these missions, and appeals strongly to the Connexion for aid in this work. It is too long to insert, and it will suffice to note that about one hundred missionaries were then employed, of whom nine were preaching in the Irish language in "the darker parts of Ireland," and seven were preaching in French to the numerous prisoners of war in various places of confinement in England. This address ends thus: "The work is God's —it bears His seal and has His blessing. Give it therefore the help of your united prayers and liberalities and influence: and become co-workers with God in setting up that Kingdom of His Son which is to fill the earth with righteousness and peace."

By whom was this address written? Father Reece, while giving me this original copy, said that himself had written it in 1813. On the other hand, the late Dr. W. M. Punshon, a very competent judge, to whom I showed it, after examining it with interest, declared that, from the style, it must be the work of that practised writer, Richard Watson. It is of course possible that Father Reece, when over eighty years of age, made a mistake as to the authorship. If this address be really a relic of the eminent Richard Watson, it is not the only one before me. I have a sketch of the Mount of Olives, with various sites indicated at the foot, the endorsement stating that Mr. Watson had executed this little sketch for my mother (then a schoolgirl) in the year 1817.

Mr. Reece, on the 1st September, 1815, moved from Bradford, taking an affectionate leave of his friends, and came to Manchester. On the 3rd he "opened his Mission" at Oldham Street at 7 a.m. The following month he went to preach anniversary sermons at Chester, and thence rode over to Tarvin, and saw his aged parents. This he seems to have done every year; but the latest entry that can be found is in the year 1829,

when his parents were eighty-four years of age, and were living in Chester.

A work on "Christian Martyrology" in three octavo volumes, which Mr. Reece compiled for the Book Committee, may here be mentioned. It is evidently taken from Foxe and many other similar sources, and cannot lay much claim to original research. But Richard Reece did not pretend to be a literary man. His strength was in the guidance he could give to others, in the firm and conciliatory way in which he presided over conferences, meetings, synods, gatherings of all kinds. Above all there was the great force of high personal character and steadfast piety.

The Almanack for 1816 contains a note of the death of a Mr. Adam Oldham, of Manchester, a wealthy man who had left the Society, and had become "conformed to the world and very proud." To him had been addressed in vain, by the Patriarch himself, this pithy remonstrance:—

"Adam, where art thou?
"Your affectionate friend,
"J. WESLEY."

Great activity this year is noted as to

Missions. Sermons and meetings take place every month, the chief speakers being Watson, Bunting, and Clarke. Opposite to April 28th is written: "On this day died my friend John Barber at Bristol. He was the first (I think the only one) to die while President."

Father Reece was by his brethren elected President of the Conference in 1816. There is a tradition that he filled the responsible office with tact and dignity; and that he justified the selection is proved by his being many years later again chosen President. Any one elected a second time as President may be regarded as no ordinary figure in Methodistic history.

The Conference was in London, and on the 29th of July (says a note in the Almanack) "R. R. was elected President." A week later, after hearing Dr. Clarke preach at Spitalfields, there were thirty-five young preachers to examine. "They are all truly alive to God and going on to perfection, clear and sound in doctrine," except one; and another was unhappily found to be a smoker. Two days later two young Prussian ministers, the sons of a Lutheran "Bishop of Berlin," were introduced to the Conference,

and there were fraternal addresses on both sides; on leaving they were presented with copies of Wesley's and Fletcher's works. On the 14th, after it had been settled that the President should visit Ireland next year, this Conference closed "in great harmony."

In October Dr. Clarke preached at Oldham Street Chapel (Manchester) the funeral sermon of "the oldest preacher, Father Thomas Taylor," who had been President in 1796 and 1809. In November there was a collection made for "forty-two poor potters," who had been "dismissed by Spode" for some reasons which were evidently not regarded as adequate.

Whether Dr. Clarke had really retired in a previous year or not, we find him now in great activity, preaching everywhere; and in these brief notes by Father Reece I can find no words of such high appreciation as those bestowed by him on Dr. Clarke's ministry. In short, he must have ranked Dr. Clarke as the finest preacher of the day. This year died "our invaluable friend and relative, Richard Bealey, of Radcliffe Close, a prince in Israel."

I find a letter dated from Hull in 1818 from James Everett, which is of great

length, and in many ways of interest. It describes a correspondence with Robert Southey, the Poet Laureate, rather controversial, and arising out of Southey's charge of "enthusiasm" against Wesley. It passes on to Missionary meetings, which had the charm of novelty, and certainly interested the people much. Lastly there comes a very long passage on the purely theological question of the "eternal sonship," which for years exercised the minds of the preachers. One of them had boldly said or written that the eternal sonship was "eternal nonsense," but the majority of his brethren took the other side. Here we find Mr. Everett in a letter discussing at length this obscure point; but points of pure theology were more discussed then than they are now, and people had more time and inclination to write long letters. The letter before me is as long as a magazine article, and is in a very clear and minute handwriting, brought within the limits of a single sheet of paper, the postage from Hull to Manchester being eightpence.

Mr. Everett I barely remember * as an able

* As sponsor he gave his name to the late Mrs. Everett Green, and in his early years was a friend of her father and grandfather—both ministers.

rather than a popular man, controversially inclined, who failed to acquire influence in the Conference, partly because he had a feeling of jealousy, which he cared not to conceal, towards Dr. Bunting. In his latter years he and two others were deemed insubordinate; but it would require a volume to describe the events which led to their severance from the Connexion, and the rise of the Secession body known as "Reformers," or "Free Methodist Churches." Mr. Everett was therefore rather closely connected in his later years with the latest of the many secessions from original Methodism. The list of seceders and secessions began with Alexander Kilham, of whose followers Father Reece spoke with little respect. Also he has some occasional notes on the "Ranters" which are not altogether flattering. By this name I understand the Primitive Methodists to be signified.

Mr. Reece in his Almanack for 1818 recorded with great satisfaction his personal happiness during the three years spent at Manchester, and the encouragement arising from a great increase in the number of members, local preachers, and class leaders. The migration to Leeds "by coach" took

place September 4th, and here for the next three years he remained. His only son, R. Marsden Reece, was near to him, being then a pupil at the well-known school for ministers' sons, at Woodhouse Grove, near Leeds. Few traditions of the sojourn at Leeds remain, beyond this, that in 1821 his eldest surviving daughter Mary was married to my father at the old Parish Church of Leeds, a venerable building often mentioned in Wesley's Journal, and which has been wholly destroyed.

In 1822 Mr. Reece again took up his abode in Bath, a place of which he spoke with affection. The *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* of this year contained a notable account of Mr. Benson, who had for years managed the affairs of the body, and was in fact the foremost of the ministers. He had died in 1821, and his mantle may be said to have fallen on Jabez Bunting, who had long assisted him in the many details of the Connexional business, and who was now his biographer in the pages of the Magazine.

While traversing the picturesque little city of Bath I have vainly tried to identify the house which Mr. Reece occupied. It may have been in King Street, near to a

chapel there to be seen, which has, however, been rebuilt. If the Reeces lived in King Street, that would account for their traditional stories of the Herschels, who lived in that same street. One story of theirs related to the polishing of a great glass or speculum, which had to be done by hand, and not vicariously ; and when the great astronomer grew tired of rubbing it, Miss Herschel took up the work until his own arm had rested ; and this went on, so the story ran, throughout one day. At Bath, as elsewhere, the Reeces formed life-long friendships, so that twenty or thirty years after removal from Bath, or some other city, old friends would suddenly appear in far removed localities, with cordial greetings, and old times would be again discussed.

On looking through these old Almanacks there are found many notes of difficulties and disputes. Sometimes it was a preacher ; but more frequently trustees or leaders took the bit in their teeth and rushed away. Then came sorrowful reflections ; but the usual ending is that quiet is restored, after much talk and many prayers, and thanks are rendered to the Lord for the return of peace.

The Conference of 1823 began at Sheffield July 30th, and a copy of the "Stations" is before me, sent by post by Mr. Reece to his married daughter and her husband. This is printed, on three sides of a large sheet, by the poet, James Montgomery, whose name appears at the foot. There were two London districts in those days, the Chairman of No. 1 being the President, Henry Moore, and the Chairman of No. 2 being Adam Clarke, LL.D., both names of renown in Methodism. Jabez Bunting appears as Editor (of the Magazine) and also as a Secretary for Missions, his colleague being R. Watson : these two were therefore resident in London. District 14 is Bath, where Mr. Reece is now found as Superintendent and also Chairman of the District. England was then, as now, divided into about 31 Districts. The Chairman of a District held, and still holds, a position of responsibility, in many respects not unlike that held in the National Church by a Bishop. He presides at every important gathering, and is much consulted and referred to by his brethren. A minister who is by "gifts and graces" marked out for promotion, first becomes Superintendent of a Circuit, and afterwards becomes Chairman

of a District; and this position not seldom becomes a kind of preparation for the Presidency, the highest post of honour and responsibility. An ex-President continues to exercise influence, often as Chairman of a District, and always as a member of several of the Connexional Committees; while at the Annual Conference he sits on the platform. This is, however, a digression intended for readers unacquainted with Methodism.

The copy of "Stations" before me has written in MS. along its margin a letter addressed by Mr. Reece to his children. The following extract may be given: "It will surprise you to know that the Conference has appointed me to go and visit America next spring; all I can say is 'The will of the Lord be done.'" There are other passages about meeting with "Uncle John," that is Mr. Marsden, a brother of Mrs. Reece, and also meeting with "Marsden," Mr. Reece's only son, then studying for the Law.

Mr. Reece went to the United States in 1824 on the first formal and fraternal visit paid to the American Methodists, as representative of the British Conference, his

companion being the youthful “Brother Hannah,”* afterwards tutor of a Wesleyan Theological College. They had long voyages in sailing ships; and while in the States were made much of and cordially welcomed in many cities and towns. Their travels in the States occupied the months of March, April, and May, and some notes of this journey will be found in the Appendix. On being introduced to the American Conference at Baltimore Mr. Reece gave a suitable address, which is fully reported in the Memoirs of his friend Garrettson.† They travelled together from New York to Philadelphia and elsewhere, and formed a close friendship. But it was not of long continuance, for Mr. Garrettson, an earnest and successful minister of the great Methodist body “died in peace, in the city of New York, in 1827, in the 52nd year of his ministry.”

Mr. Reece favourably impressed the good people of the United States; and that he

* Dr. Hannah was father of the late Archdeacon Hannah, and grandfather of the present Vicar of Brighton.

† “Memoirs of Rev. F. Garrettson. New York 1829, pp. 281-293.

formed many friendships amongst them is abundantly proved by their calls on him subsequently, and by the Journals and other publications which arrived by post, especially from New York, even twenty years later.

Dr. Gregory first saw Father Reece at the Conference of 1830, when he and the other schoolboys from Woodhouse Grove were introduced to the assembled ministers. The President requested Father Reece to address them, which he did, and the appeal, adds Dr. Gregory, was "touchingly paternal and realised all I had heard of Richard Reece as a model Methodist minister."

I find two letters of this period from Dr. Adam Clarke the commentator, between whom and Father Reece there was a tender friendship. The language is that of closest intimacy; and Dr. Clarke ends with affectionate messages to Mrs. Reece and "your noble daughters." Finding that his friend undervalued Shakespeare, Dr. Clarke sent as a present a library edition in two volumes, with a racy inscription to the effect that any man not well acquainted with this author's works was "in a state of mental nonage; and for the man who despises them public prayers should be offered."

As a fact, however, Mr. Reece when quite young had copied into his MS. book many choice passages from Hamlet, Cymbeline, Henry V., Macbeth, and Othello.

In 1832 there arrived a letter of stupendous length from the Bahamas, containing some interesting passages. The greater part is written by Mrs. Penny, and the concluding part by her husband Charles Penny, a missionary. The writing is a marvel of neatness, and is all contained on one large sheet, the postage being one and ninepence. Mrs. Penny describes Nassau as a comfortable place to live in, but pensively adds that "every place is a place of trial while we are labouring in the vineyard of the Lord." Mr. Penny's first trouble arose out of his refusal to wear the gown, bands, and cassock, which the "formal and fashionable" folks preferred. Then he had fierce disputes with certain "white leaders," who were tyrannical and annoying towards the poor people of colour, whom Mr. Penny resolved to protect. He and his wife had a hard time of it, in the face of "privations and persecutions." Yet they declared that in spite of all their troubles they "never felt a warmer attachment to, or a more eager

desire to be employed in Missionary work." They then speak of the debilitating effect of the climate, which in summer made close application and letter writing very tedious. Mrs. Penny describes herself as "Your affectionate daughter in the Gospel"; while Mr. Penny with less effusion ends thus: "My dr. Brother, yours very respectfully."

Father Reece was stationed at Rochester in 1832, and from thence went north to Sheffield; and this was a time of disquiet and of disturbance in the Connexion, for there was "a crisis," as the phrase now runs. Dr. Warren's name had for some time been in all mouths, and his line of conduct raised new and difficult questions. He had opposed Dr. Bunting's policy, and he declined to recognise the Methodistic Courts. Dr. Warren had sympathisers, and a firm hand was required at the helm. Mr. Reece, being credited with the quality of firmness, and with a conciliatory mind, was again chosen President; and again he justified the choice of his brethren, according to the testimony of Dr. Gregory. It is sufficient here to say that—not without risk and loss—peace was restored, and the legal questions were settled. The

Court of Chancery decided that Dr. Warren was bound to obey the laws and regulations of Methodism, being amenable to the orders of duly convened and constituted courts of the body to which he belonged. This is now a "leading case" for the voluntary religious bodies. Dr. Warren* seceded, obtained ordination at the hands of a bishop, and twenty years later was still heard of as the incumbent of a small parish.

Father Reece while at Sheffield lived in the Chapel House at Carver Street, and was, as usual, active alike in regular duty and on occasional journeys. Amongst his friends the Holy and Longden families may be named, but details are wanting, as no written record of this period has been found. It would be interesting to have his own account of the incident at the Conference of 1836 which forms the subject of the next chapter.

* He was father to Samuel Warren, Q.C., the novelist.

CHAPTER III

THE CONFERENCE OF 1836

THE episode which marked the year 1836 is not of much moment in the eyes of Methodists, while Canon Hockin and some other Anglican writers consider it of high importance, and comment on it largely. It was the first general ordaining or “setting apart” of the preachers, or, as they now were more usually called, Wesleyan ministers.* It is well known that John Wesley by the imposition of his hands with prayer “set apart” (he did not use the word “ordain”) several missionaries, first for America, then for Scotland. To each was given a certificate or *Testimonium*; and if more of these documents could be found

* Some missionaries had been thus “set apart” at various dates before 1836, but there was no general rule.

light would be thrown on the obscure points—what was the exact nature of the new commission, and where was it to be exercised? The ascertained facts are really few. Dr. Coke and the Superintendents in America very soon called themselves Bishops; and they have handed that title down to their successors, although Wesley very strongly expressed disapproval of their use of the word “Bishop.” A Mr. Owen, whose *Testimonium* has lately been found, was “set apart” as a Deacon—which term necessarily implies a limited range of duty. Three preachers were “set apart” without being sent out of England, and from the evidence I think it was designed that sooner or later they should be sent away. Mr. Pawson and several others who were sent away to Scotland were, on their return, again placed on an exactly equal footing with all those brethren on whom the patriarch Wesley’s hands were never laid. Finally, the Conference soon after Wesley’s death resolved against the recognition of any special right or privilege on the part of the few who had thus been “set apart.” They were to be treated in all respects exactly like their brethren. So things continued for many

years, nor was there any general rule until 1836. The Conference then resolved that in future the "ancient and Scriptural usage" of the imposition of hands should be exercised by the President and ex-President for the time being and a few other seniors.

It is better to quote the very words of Canon Hockin, who thus describes what followed :—*

"The President and ex-President for the year 1836 were Jabez Bunting and Richard Reece : the Secretary, Robert Newton. All were preachers who had themselves received no Ordination with laying on of hands from anybody whatever, and consequently had no Orders, whether Presbyterian or Episcopal."

The facts as here stated cannot be denied ; but modern Methodists by no means accept the inferences drawn from those facts by Canon Hockin and other Anglican writers. The case of the Methodists may perhaps be summed up thus :—

The ministers who laid their hands on their younger brethren did not affect to confer

* "John Wesley and Modern Methodism." 4th edition, p. 6.

what an Anglican knows as “Ordination.” Clearly no man can confer on another what he does not himself possess. The senior ministers referred to had themselves become ministers, (1) by the Divine call, and its results; and (2) by recognition in the congregation; and what they did was to mark, by a superadded ceremony, their selection and appointment of their younger brethren. As a minister, according to this view, does not become such by virtue of any special form or ceremony of Ordination, that is a mere incident and not a necessary condition.

I have ventured briefly to indicate rather than describe the two different views now prevailing as to the new departure of 1836, when Father Reece as ex-President took part in the first formal and public ordination of the young Methodist ministers. He was not the man, in an important point, to yield up his own judgment to others. He had on some matters differed from Dr. Bunting (although there was a brotherly regard between them), and he would certainly have differed here, had he not been “fully persuaded in his own mind” that the new ceremony was decorous and also justifiable. Of course the old question arises, as it did in 1793—Was this a

logical course, considering that (in theory) the Methodists were inside the pale of the Church, having never formally seceded?

It is no part of the present writer's task to discuss these questions, or to express any opinion on them. The question—What is valid Ordination? involves the exact position of many millions of good Christians scattered over all parts of the world. It is one of such vast difficulty that Bishop Lightfoot, the first biblical scholar of our time, has left no clear and final utterance upon it.

A learned Professor of Divinity (afterwards a bishop) gave a lecture to his class on the question of the Apostolical Succession, in which the arguments on both sides were fully and clearly set forth. At its close a student, observing that the professor had expressed no opinion, and being perplexed, ventured to ask which view was right and which was wrong. Dr. B. merely replied "Study both sides and then decide for yourself."

After the Conference of 1836 the President went for the second time to Ireland, one or two of the brethren accompanying him. No record of this tour is found, and tradition says little as to the journey, which presum-

ably extended to Cork and some other places. The President of the English is *ex officio* President of the Irish Conference, and has a general "look round" while on the green isle. I once met with an Irish minister who went with him a coach journey (railways were not then), when they had a break down; and the bystanders asked them to get out by the window. Father Reece declined this undignified mode of escape, and desired that the coach might be at once restored to an upright position—which was done. He was difficult to gainsay, and few at any time of his life cared to contradict him. It is interesting to find this man brought up on a Cheshire farm, not only holding his own, but receiving in all assemblies, large and small, of his fellow-men, respect, deference, obedience. Gibbon* has remarked, referring to Cola di Rienzi and Oliver Cromwell, that "the consciousness of merit and power may elevate the manners to the station."

* "Decline and Fall" Milman's ed. vol. vi. p. 378.



REV^Y RICHARD REECE.

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CHAPTER IV

WITHIN LIVING MEMORY

THE foregoing pages are sketched, perhaps somewhat dimly, from old notes in almanacks, old letters, and old traditions. There is no one now living who can remember Mr. Reece in his prime, when he was active, laborious, and in full vigour of body and mind. Perhaps some clear perception of him may be gained on looking at the portrait by John Jackson, R. A. In those features one may see a judicial mind, a clear judgment, a strong sense of duty, and resoluteness in its discharge. The few who now recollect Father Reece can only recall the figure of a venerable silver-haired man, not indeed bent by age, but old in manner, with a voice impaired, yet on the whole showing an old age "frosty but kindly."

Before proceeding to Hull he lived—odd as it appears—at Spitalfields. But no part of London has changed more for the worse in sixty years. There were in those days decent householders all around, and many of them were silk weavers. The minister's house was a good one, with a faded appearance; and in the garden was a large mulberry tree, which told the story of the original inhabitant. The chapel, which may not now exist, was a respectable building dating from the early eighteenth century, once a place for the worship of the Huguenots, who much resorted to Spitalfields.

I have no clear mental impression of Mr. Reece until after the year 1837, when he was for the first and only time appointed to Hull. Thither he and the family proceeded in the good steamer *Waterwitch*, for railways had not then been opened. It was fine September weather, and the voyage occupying some twenty hours, being my first, fixed itself in the memory. On arriving at Hull the docks, the shipping, and the busy work of loading and unloading in a large port all seemed very attractive. I remember the arrival of the party in Spencer Street, near the Beverley Road, at

a house comfortable though not large, and which was all in readiness, "swept and garnished." If the steward was not there, that good man arrived very shortly, all anxiety to know if everything was as it should be; and the Methodist minister always felt that a comfortable house and a welcome awaited him. Then arrived several huge wooden trunks full of books, which had to be unpacked and arranged. Lastly arrived "the young man," as he was called, that is to say, the very junior preacher allotted as a help to the senior one, and quartered on the top floor.

"The young man" remained for a year, and was then replaced by another. By good fortune one of these was Samuel Romilly Hall, a delightful friend and companion. He was as a preacher too full of energy, who had to be warned against excessive straining of his voice. People said that he was apt to "scream," and had injured a blood vessel, and was in danger of doing so again. But he was universally liked, and especially by the young. He used knives with all the art of a skilled mechanic—carved boats, rigged me a toy ship, and ingeniously made many compasses of cork and steel. He was under

middle height, with a pleasant and rather full oval face, regular features, bright eyes, and a taking manner. It was said that he might have been a wealthy merchant of Bristol, like his father, but that he chose, like St. Matthew, to give up all for the ministry. Indoors my companion was often Mr. Hall.

On fine days many a long walk did I take with Father Reece, as he liked a companion, even a childish one, and was a good listener, and encouraged questions. These walks were often taken to the villages around Hull, each with its small chapel. Occasionally some good friend lent a gig; and I well remember that once while driving we were stopped at a toll-bar—there were many of them in those days, but by statute ministers of all kinds while on duty were exempt.

“I am going to preach at Sutton,” replied Father Reece.

“Yes; but is the little boy going to preach?” asked the toll-bar man.

Father Reece smiled, and handed him the sixpence.

Now and then, I think not frequently, Father Reece on a warm evening of summer would hold his village service in the open

air: one place I remember was close to a churchyard wall, and under a large tree. On Sunday his work was in Hull itself, and frequently in Waltham Street Chapel. It was an old-fashioned place, badly located in a back street, and containing many square and lofty pews. Many an hour have I spent in a retired corner of one of these high pews; and as I was not of an age to appreciate the sermon, I studied, a hundred times over, the engravings in a small illustrated Bible, thoughtfully provided for the young.

The singing interested me, for the members of the choir were very visible in the gallery just behind the pulpit, and a row of singing Yorkshiremen, with their "parts" robustly expressed, compelled attention.

In those days the chapels at Hull were not imposing edifices. "George Yard" was hidden down a lane in the oldest part of the town;* and Mr. Fowler, who ruled there, was what would now be called a Progressive. He had a strongly marked and narrow face, with long nose and chin, the features being those of a thoughtful,

* A "preaching house" (as Wesley calls it) built in 1788 by Benson and others, and humorously mentioned by Wesley, *Tyerman*, vol. iii. p. 538.

clever man with a will of his own. Of him I call to mind two anecdotes. After the evening service at George Yard there was a long prayer-meeting, and certain enthusiasts kept this up, with small regard to the quiet of the chapel-house adjoining. Nine o'clock, ten o'clock, and still the singing and praying went on, until Mr. Fowler sent the chapel-keeper in, with strict orders to clear the place and extinguish the lights. There was of course the usual printed "plan" headed "Preachers' Plan," and great was the sensation when Mr. Fowler altered this heading, and substituted the new and significant words, "Wesleyan Ministers' and Local Preachers' Plan." Sometimes at George Yard, or far away in the Beverley Road, two small boys might be seen at play. One of them was Mr. Fowler's younger son, now an ex-Cabinet Minister and one of the leaders of the Liberal party; and the other was the present writer.

On Saturday afternoons there was the children's meeting at Waltham Street, a kind of Bible class which Mr. Reece never neglected. Perhaps the reason why he always began with the same hymn, "Come,

ye that love the Lord," was that he found it most easy to set this special tune, for his musical skill was not remarkable.

In 1839 the "Centenary" marked the fact that in 1739 John Wesley had organised the Societies which now bear his name. There was a project for raising a large sum; and the question of the day was, how much could be raised? At an important meeting (the nature and locality are forgotten) Father Reece uttered his belief that £200,000 could be raised. Tradition says that all his brethren, incredulous, indulged in a broad smile, not to say a laugh. But the result showed that his generous estimate was almost exactly correct.

That large sum was raised with effort and enthusiasm. Of course deputations went over England, and meetings about the Centenary were held everywhere. I first saw the famous Dr. Jabez Bunting at the meeting held for this purpose at Waltham Street Chapel. His figure was hardly impressive, he was of middle size, portly, looking like a Mayor. The charm was in the voice, which once heard could not easily be forgotten. It had a ring of authority and decision, though not of harshness, and it was

at the same time flexible and persuasive. Was Dr. Bunting great as a preacher? He was said to have in his treasury a few great sermons; but his fame was based rather on his abilities as tactician and organiser, in short, he had the qualities of a statesman; and he did for Methodism what Bishop S. Wilberforce did for the Anglican Church. He may not have been in the very first rank as a preacher; yet I heard in his lifetime, from one who knew him well and was well qualified to speak, that in extemporary prayer (much used in Methodism) he was without any equal. Well do I remember Dr. Bunting reading out from the platform at Waltham Street a list of Centenary subscriptions, great and small. Amongst the latter was one which had been given in my name; and observing this, the Doctor paused to say that he had an exceeding regard for my mother. It was pleasant for a boy to hear such a thing said *coram populo.** That is sixty years ago; and the new fund of

* The Buntings came from Monyash, a little village in Derbyshire. I cannot recall the features of Mrs. Bunting (who had been Miss Maclardie, of Macclesfield), although I well remember her daughter Emma, and her three sons.



REV^Y RICHARD REECE

AN ENGLISH POET.

1899-1900 is to be a million, which seems to show that the Methodists are about three times as rich, and twice as numerous as they were in 1839.

Father Reece visited much amongst the people ; but there were whispered complaints that he was rather apt to neglect the rich while attending to the poor. When he made a call he would quickly turn the conversation to a religious subject, and then end with a short prayer. Amongst his chief friends at Hull were old Dr. Sandwith, and the Holmes, Alder, and Bowden families, to all of whom he was much attached. He was now approaching seventy-five, but was hale and strong, capable of long walks, and of enduring fatigue. I remember in those pre-railway days at Hull seeing him off by coach at five a.m. one morning, it being still dark ; and he was about to journey outside, the whole day, as far as Manchester. The only signs of old age were in the voice and in the handwriting, both of which resembled, as it were, a wavy or uncertainly drawn, instead of a straight line. But in all other respects Father Reece was upright, stalwart, and healthy—rarely laid up at home, and still more rarely known to consult a doctor.

Father Reece has been thus described by Dr. Gregory, one of his very few surviving friends : " Alike in physique, in countenance, and character, he would have added dignity to any line of monarchs. . . . He would have made a noble figure on the floor of the House addressing the Imperial Parliament with his commanding voice and his strong, apt, manly English. He had a richly florid English complexion, and an imposing stateliness of figure and demeanour, which arrested attention and commanded admiration as he strode along the streets."

Father Reece was just over six feet high, but looked more, as he stood and walked with the uprightness of a marble column ; his hair, which was not scanty, was of a bright and peculiar silver sheen, very different to grey or dead white. His costume was that of the beginning of the century—coat with high collar, continuations and long stockings, resembling the costume of a Q.C. when in court-dress. He wore long gaiters, a hat low and wide-brimmed, like a bishop's, but of course without rosette or strings. He did not, like Wesley, wear silk stockings and shoe buckles. He had a cape for winter use, and a great cloak for outside wear on

long mail-coach journeys. He was one of the last who were never known to wear trousers; and two or three of his elder brethren resembled him in dress. The next group—Dr. Bunting, Newton, Hannah, Jackson, and their compeers, conformed in their costume far more closely to modern usage. If asked whether Father Reece much resembled any man now living, I should reply that he was on the whole more picturesque in figure, and more handsome in feature, than any old man now visible. But if driven to say whom he at the age of seventy most resembled, I should point to Canon Sanderson, of Brighton.

Father Reece attached great—probably undue—importance to early rising. It was said that the “Bands,” or select inner circles of specially good people from the classes (hereafter to be described) sometimes met, also that prayer meetings were held at six a.m. There are many notes of such gatherings in his early *Almanacks*. But the “young men” who in succession lived under his wing, even these, one after another, he failed to persuade of the benefit of very early services. Herein Father Reece of course followed Wesley, that wonderful man who, himself

contented with some six hours of sleep, naturally thought that other people were lazy.

In September, 1840, Father Reece, his family, including myself, the great boxes of books, and the other movables, came up from Hull in the steamer to London—he had been appointed once more to City Road (1st London Circuit), the very place, the very house, to which he and his young bride had come in 1796, not long after Wesley's death.

City Road Chapel has been much altered since 1840, for the architect and the decorator have had a free hand.* The pulpit from which Wesley preached is there, lowered and repaired. The reading desk from which Charles Wesley, and after him a succession of clergymen, read the prayers of the Church, is not to be found. Considerable changes have taken place amongst the monumental tablets and the other landmarks—perhaps some of these changes were necessary.

For three years Father Reece worked here—it was his last period of regular and sustained work. It had this advantage, that very long walks were not necessary.

* “Wesley's Chapel is in appearance a new building.”—*Methodist Times*, July 13, 1899. This, however, is an exaggeration.

The house, formerly 23, now 47, City Road, remains little altered; the alterations are chiefly in the furniture, which in 1840 remained as Wesley left it. Immediately after reaching London, Father Reece was summoned to the wedding at Kilburn of his only son, Richard Marsden Reece, who married Caroline, one of the daughters of Mr. W. H. Smith, senior. It was a happy marriage, and Father Reece gained an affectionate daughter-in-law. One of the youngest of those present at the wedding was the bride's only brother, Mr. W. H. Smith, junior, then a lad of fifteen, destined (although none could then suspect it) to become an eminent politician and a Cabinet Minister.

CHAPTER V

THE CONFERENCE OF 1842

THE event of 1842 was the Conference, which met at Wesley's Chapel in the City Road. There was "open house" for old friends, and a daily amount of lively conversation which was for quiet folks exciting. There arrived "Bishop Soule" from the Southern States, and in his hand he carried Asbury's stick, a much-admired relic. There came in from day to day ministers with well-known names. George Osborn, who showed us much kindness then and in after years; Dr. Hannah, who had gone to America with Father Reece in 1824, and many others, came into the Chapel House as they listed; some were old friends, some were helpers of later years—all were welcome.

Being on good terms with all the officials down to the chapel-keeper, I now and then slipped in and saw and heard something of the Conference. One day there was with difficulty hoisted up on the platform the Nestor of Methodism, Henry Moore, then very aged and infirm. It was curious to gaze on one who had been the intimate friend and companion, and was also the executor of John Wesley. Behind and right and left of Mr. Moore on the platform were the American Bishop and many seniors, most of them ex-presidents like Father Reece, who of the entire group on that platform was the stateliest figure.

On a certain evening there was a Ministers' Meeting in the "Morning Chapel," and there I heard Dr. Bunting's son William complaining bitterly to the assembled brethren of the work and responsibility thrown on his father. "It is too much ; it will shorten his life." Such was the plaintive appeal. William M. Bunting was a delightful companion, full of knowledge and of humour. He was quite unlike his father, delicate, with a slender and scholarly figure. He was (if one may say so) more cultured, better read, fonder of the Church, of traditions,

of old usages. He it was who when asked to marry a couple in a chapel replied, with mock-heroic indignation, that he "would rather bury them."

I have already mentioned George Osborn (afterwards D.D.) as one of Father Reece's chosen friends. At the Conference of 1842 he was often in the Chapel House, where he took a kindly interest in my boyish reading and gave useful hints. In later years we often met, and one admired the extent of his knowledge and his method of imparting it. He was born to instruct and improve his fellow-creatures. Amongst other things, he taught me to avoid conventional slang, and incorrect and ambiguous terms in speaking and writing. He impressed on me and on others that "Methodist," and not "Wesleyan," was the proper term to use. He explained that John Wesley did not say "Society," but always "Societies," because he had early gathered up and woven together the many pre-existing religious societies which he found all over England. Dr. Osborn was by nature an old-fashioned "Church and State" man. He took me with him to a cathedral service (Chichester) and enjoyed it. The last act of kindness I

received from Dr. Osborn was his interest in a life of John Wesley which I wrote in 1880 for the S.P.C.K. He not only sent me a letter of several pages on this and the collateral topics, but he looked over all the proof-sheets of the book, and was critical withal. Dr. Osborn outlived his old friend, Father Reece, for forty years, became President as a matter of course, was re-elected President, and was universally honoured. His appearance as an old man was very different from that of his earlier years.

Another of Father Reece's friends, several years junior to himself, was Robert Newton. He was not a statesman like Dr. Bunting, nor a man of high culture like W. M. Bunting, nor a theologian like Hannah, Farrar, and Jackson, nor a teacher of wisdom and a cyclopædia of knowledge like Osborn.

Newton had the advantage of them all in this way, that he was nobly handsome and an orator by nature. Tall, with good features, grizzled hair, fine eyes, and very dark arched eyebrows, he was impressive even before he spoke, and when he rolled out his rich organ notes he was irresistible. I have listened to orators at the bar and in the pulpit for half a century, and have never

met with such a magnificent voice as that of Robert Newton. The only voices approaching it in quality were two. There was "old Lablache," who may still be remembered by some who went to concerts about the year 1850; and years later there was Mr. Rodwell, Q.C., who used to say grace before and after dinner in the Middle Temple Hall in tones not to be forgotten. Newton had his D.D. degree (like other eminent Wesleyans) from an American university. He was not great in conversation, nor did his sermons and speeches, when examined, show original power. He had simply the great gift of being able to present commonplaces in the most attractive and forcible way.

Dr. Hannah, who was frequently at the Chapel House in 1842, was another of Father Reece's dear friends. He was a nervous man, who looked half-blinded, and was very quiet and thoughtful. With him appeared Mrs. Hannah, a motherly and mild lady in brown silk; one whom Jane Austen would have liked to draw. Mrs. Hannah, like Mrs. Reece and others of their day, wore a modified Quaker costume, which included a large cap. This sober costume was most becoming

when adopted by elderly ladies with regular and placid features.

Dr. Dixon was a frequent guest, an interesting man, full of originality kept under control. I see him now, with his clear-cut features and white locks, reading in an arm-chair, now and then looking up and saying something quaintly sarcastic, but not unkindly so. Then there were John Scott, George Marsden, John Farrar, and his brother Abraham, Dr. Beaumont, Mr. Jobson, John Mason, and several others who ought to be mentioned as valued friends of Father Reece.

It was during the decade 1840–1850 that my own knowledge of Father Reece (as he was now usually called) extended.

About the time of the Conference of 1842 —it may have been a little earlier or later—I accompanied him to Tunbridge Wells. No railway had been opened, and the journey was performed in a curious kind of vehicle, not much more cheerful than a prison van, through a fruitful and beautiful country. We stayed with the old friend of the Hull days, Samuel Romilly Hall, who was now married and settled. In recent years not being able to find his pleasant house and

garden, I conclude that they must have been blotted out by the railway or the station. There were many walks and country drives, but few incidents which are held in memory. One day we heard a letter read, and saw an old Greek Bible or Testament produced, both relics of Dr. A. Clarke. On another day we heard F. J. Jobson (afterwards D.D.) preach somewhere near Tunbridge Wells a sermon ingeniously constructed. The text was "My son, give Me thine heart," and the preacher at once divided his sermon under the six heads, each consisting of a single word. I have since wondered why preachers do not oftener give more thought to the selection of the text and to the arrangement of the discourse, so as to fix both indelibly (as in this instance) in the youthful mind. Many years later I spent a pleasant day or two near Dublin with Mr. Hall now full of honours and high duties, but genial and kindly as when he was "the young man" at Hull.*

The year 1843 brought with it the death of Mrs. Reece; she was a victim to house-

* He was President in 1868, and died not long afterwards at the age of sixty-three, in Bristol, his native city.

hold cares, which nothing would induce her either to neglect or to devolve on others; and without having attained to old age she passed away, to the great sorrow of her children and grandchildren. I remember the funeral in the little cemetery where sleeps John Wesley at the rear of City Road Chapel: but this ground being soon afterwards closed, the remains were reinterred at Highgate, where Father Reece was buried seven years later.

I was now old enough to take note of much of what I daily saw and heard, as I walked with Father Reece to many of his services and meetings. He was now on the verge of eighty, but still upright and hale, although his voice, tremulous without being weak, indicated old age. He had many Committees to attend, Missions, Education, and the "Book Room" being some of their objects. At the latter I found consolation while waiting for him in the supply of books on view, many of them illustrated. I remember one of the Book Room staff, a small man with a prominent nose. His name was Wesley, and he was related, not distantly, to the illustrious brothers, John and Charles.

It was in the evening that I was wont to

go with Father Reece to visit the classes, to which he went duly provided with a bundle of small blank tickets, which I had previously cut out from a large printed sheet. As some readers know nothing about a "Class-meeting" it is as well to go into particulars. Every genuine Methodist was enrolled in some class under a "leader," who might be a lay-brother or a minister, but was usually the former. For classes consisting only of women there were female leaders; but most of the classes were mixed. The usual number in a class was a dozen, or from that to twenty; but now and then a larger number assembled under the care of some specially popular leader. A minister visited every class periodically, when the class-book, bound in red leather, was laid before him, and he marked each as absent or present, spoke to all, and renewed the tickets. The normal sum payable by each member of a class was a penny a week, and a shilling at the Quarterly Visitation. This was the rule; but while a very poor person would be excused from payment, many of the well-to-do doubled or trebled the normal sum. The minister, looking round the room, in order

invited each member to state his or her "experience," and then came the brief personal narrative of spiritual benefits, of trials, of doubts, of temptations, as the case might be, lasting for about two or three minutes. This was followed by equally brief comment and advice given by the minister. The book being made up, the tickets renewed, and each member having been separately dealt with, the meeting closed, as it had begun, with a hymn and prayer. No questions were asked, and each member said as much or as little as he thought fit, so that the supposed analogy to the confessional is an idle fancy. There had been smaller gatherings called "Bands," as every reader of Wesley's Journal knows; but if they then survived cannot be said from personal knowledge.

Father Reece attached very great importance to the Class-meeting, and he was in the habit of inquiring of people whether they "met in class," and met regularly; and of young people if they had joined a class. He said that it answered to, and in fact realised, that "Communion of Saints" of which speaks the Apostles' Creed. The indirect effect of the "Class" was very good, as the mere knowledge that a man was expected at

short intervals to speak of his spiritual state to his fellows, was a powerful deterrent from evil. There was incidentally this great advantage—that the minister at his Visitation could—subject to appeal—get rid of an undesirable person by withholding a ticket. No one had a right to a ticket—there was no obligation to renew it. Here then was effectual discipline, of the want of which Anglican writers now complain.*

It may be objected that Father Reece over-estimated the Class-meeting, which he would only see in its best phase. He would never have occasion to hear the inferior kind of leader, giving out bits of advice of small value. And it is true that the whole value of the institution lay in the judicious selection of the leaders. The ministers did, and still do, their best in this respect: but if in any place the materials for such choice do not exist, they have to become leaders themselves—an alternative of which, however, Wesley for some reason strongly disapproved.

* Canon Gore writes of a Church which (1) has not power to make rules for its own use and guidance, and which (2) cannot or does not exercise discipline over its members. (*Contemporary Review*, April, 1899.)

Father Reece's week-days then were well occupied with Committee meetings, which in London were numerous: with these visitations of the classes, and with pastoral calls.

Sunday at City Road was a peculiarly busy day, perhaps less tranquil than was altogether desirable. For instead of that quiet interval before the morning service which seems a necessity, there arrived at the Chapel House for breakfast a party of ten or a dozen "local" preachers. This was an old custom, dating from Wesley's days, which no one had liked to abrogate. This custom accounts for the immense tea-pot in blue and white which may still be found at City Road, although some ill-informed writer has vainly argued from it that Wesley must have been (like his friend Dr. Johnson) an immoderate tea-drinker.

The Sunday morning service at City Road was long, for the Common Prayer-book, or a revised edition of it, was used, and the sermons were longer than those in the churches. Sometimes expositions varied the course of the lesson; and often a long extempore prayer would follow—all this was at the minister's option.

One of the finest spirits amongst Father Reece's younger brethren was W. M. Bunting, and he both commented — sometimes at great length—on the lesson, and habitually preached for upwards of an hour.

Often did I go, whether on a Sunday or a week-day, to some outlying place like Islington or Hackney. At the former place the Chubb family were wont to receive Father Reece, and at the latter the Loddiges. Everywhere he was welcomed, for people were impressed by his simple dignity, and were interested in his old-fashioned manners and pronunciation and costume. “The last of Wesley's own preachers” was often whispered. Possibly there were two or three others living who, like him, had been “called out” and sent to preach by the patriarch; but it was always said in my younger days that Father Reece was the very latest of Wesley's own preachers to continue at work. And at work he did continue until 1846—fifty-five and a half years after Wesley's death. In that year he was placed on the supernumerary or retired list.

The minister's house at City Road is little altered. Father Reece's study was the front

drawing-room, and his bedroom was immediately behind it. I believe that in 1843 both rooms were furnished just as in Wesley's time; and that Wesley's bedstead, a dark four-poster, and his armchair were in fact those used by Father Reece. The tradition was that Wesley died in that bedroom, and had, by his own desire, been moved into that armchair just before the end came. There is a well-known engraving of the scene, which may contain good portraits, but is inaccurate as regards both the furniture of the room and its appearance. Little of the old furniture now remains—what became of the rest? I am unwilling to state anything which is outside of my personal knowledge; but as the question has been raised, I may state what I believe to have been the fate of nearly all the old furniture of the Chapel House. About the middle of this century, or rather before that date, a senior minister entered into occupation of the Chapel House. His daughters had modern tastes—cared for few of the old escritoires, bureaux, chairs, and four-posters. So they persuaded the too-yielding stewards to clear out and sell the old furniture. It was not suspected that fifty years later the

pendulum would swing the other way, that last-century furniture of this very kind would be eagerly sought after, and that visitors from all the world over would come to see this house, justly expecting to find it exactly as it was in Wesley's time. Equally bad things may be recorded, no doubt ; but I am concerned to say publicly that Father Reece and his family were content with all the old articles ; and that it was after his time that the besom of destruction nearly swept out the Chapel House at City Road.

CHAPTER VI

FATHER REECE AS A VETERAN

THE more active years of Father Reece were now closing; and it was a question whether at the age of seventy-eight he would persist in regular work. At the Conference of 1843 his brethren were considerate, and they appointed the veteran to the easy and healthful town of Margate. He was also allowed a "young man" of his own choice—Samuel Wilkinson, his sister's son, for whom he had much regard. To one accustomed to large and busy places, and who had given much time to central Committee work, this was a kind of retirement. His three years at Margate were happily spent—the work was light, the ministerial staff ample, the distances easy, and the people kind and friendly. Methodism may not be strong in the South Coasts, but it is at least free from a special feature, not a pleasing one, which

may be noticed in the Midlands and the North. There are found *the newly-enriched*, who by their ill-bred arrogance and airs must lessen the comfort of any minister. These people may possibly be found at Wolverhampton, but they are rarer in London, and they are unheard of in Kent. Such upstarts have been cleverly sketched by one who intimately knows them,* and who declares that they "feel that in patronising religion they are conferring a favour, and meriting a vote of thanks. They sit in a comfortable back pew, with curtains round it hanging on brass rods." Of such Methodists there were none to be found in Father Reece's last charge in the Isle of Thanet. Very unlike them were his intimate friends, the families of the Gaskells and Rowes.

During the three years which he passed at Margate I had ceased to be a regular inmate, and was only a frequent visitor. I find a dated letter inviting me to spend Christmas with him, and containing these passages:—

"I am pleased to receive your congratulations on my eightieth birthday, and thankful to my Heavenly Father that they found me

* Miss E. T. Fowler in "Isabel Carnaby."

in good health and able to preach three times on that day. Thus does the Lord give strength for the day to His servants. . .

"My best love to your mama and all the family. Pray much and study closely ; and do what your mama tells you the first time [of telling], and the blessing of God shall be upon you, with that of your affectionate grandfather,

" RICHD. REECE.

" MARGATE, *December 4, 1844.*"

In the summer also I remained some time at Margate, going with Father Reece to old chapel ruins, Birchington, Minster, and other places. He was always willing to converse, and I remember that the Wars of Napoleon were frequently discussed. He did not, however, approve of young people putting questions merely to save themselves the trouble of looking into the ordinary books of reference. "Read and you will know," was his frequent reply to a question of this kind.

A frequent subject of conversation at this time in all the Methodist circles, was the Tractarian Movement. They agreed that Newman and his friends were really injuring the Church which themselves chiefly valued

as a “bulwark of Protestantism.” Methodists of the old school were apt to say—I have heard it hundreds of times—“We adhere to the Prayer-book and the Articles, but the English Church loses its character and value, and its claim upon us, if Pusey and Newman are allowed to prevail.” Then came the day when Newman openly went over to Rome, and when English Churchmen were stricken with fear and sorrow. The Methodist community serenely said, “We expected this—it is no great loss—Newman is a sentimental kind of man, afraid to use his mind: what he does counts for little, for he is no theologian.” Now, strange to say, they had taken the measure of the man better than those Churchmen who were lamenting the loss of Newman.* Father Reece had passages of arms in the houses of some friends, with certain of their young sons, who were (or were preparing to become) curates. “Sprigs of divinity” he called them. His reverence for the English Church proceeded from his ardent approval of the English Reformation; and the youths annoyed him when they sneered at the Reformers. One of these

* Newman wrote “I am not a theologian.” “Life of Dr. Pusey,” vol. iv. p. 161.

quoted against him the Fathers, and received for reply, "I prefer the grandfathers," *i.e.* the Apostles. Puseyism was "in the air," and on the tongue of every one from 1840 to 1846, and I well remember hearing Father Reece talk over these matters with some who were connected with the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* and with a series of tracts designed to counteract the famous "Tracts for the Times." One special tract was an adverse criticism of "Lyra Apostolica," a little book of poetry, to many expressions in which Father Reece objected. Now it is worth recording that the "Christian Year," on the contrary, had met with no such disapproval, and was found in Father Reece's house, and in Methodist houses everywhere. To Dr. Bunting was ascribed at this period a very bad pun—"Newmaniacs."

Levity was little encouraged by the old Methodists—it might not be wrong, but it was not expedient. It must be admitted that Father Reece's life might have been more cheerful had he been, like his own father, a humorist. John Wesley sometimes unbent in letter-writing and in conversation, and could even be jocular. Then many of Father Reece's later friends, such as Drs. Dixon and

Beaumont, G. B. MacDonald, W. M. Bunting, and John Lomas, were distinctly humorous; yet these examples failed to influence one to whom gravity was a second nature.

I am unwilling in these pages, intended only as the record of a good man's life, and a tribute to his memory, to obtrude any private opinions. But I cannot refrain from saying that the attitude of the Methodists towards the National Church has much altered since his day; and that while that alteration cannot be wholly set down to any one cause, yet that nothing has widened the gulf so much as the permeating influence of Tractarianism in the English Church. Pusey and Newman, their fellows and their followers, have wrought many improvements; yet they have made it impossible (humanly speaking) that the Methodistic offshoots should reunite with the main Anglican stem. Home Reunion is therefore at present but the dream of amiable optimists.

As this booklet may fall into the hands of some who do not know what was held and taught by the old Methodist preachers, it is well to briefly set it forth.

Father Reece and his brethren adhered

firmly to all that is contained in the two great Creeds—the Apostles' and the Nicene. I never heard him refer to the psalm or symbol ascribed to Athanasius, nor was it recited in the Methodist chapels.

He took the Arminian as opposed to the Calvinistic view in debated matters. This necessarily followed from the standards which Wesley had prescribed. Methodist theology is to be found in the "New Testament Notes" and in the first four volumes of Wesley's Sermons. Wesley had many "pious opinions" which are not expressed in these books, but in other writings; but no modern Methodist considers himself bound, legally or morally, to the exact following of Wesley *outside* the five standard volumes.

Methodist theology is admittedly rigid—perhaps too rigid for the taste of this generation; but in those days few persons knew anything of German criticism, and not a question had been raised, *e.g.*, as to the authorship of the books of either Testament. Father Reece spoke always of the Bible as wholly authentic, and as wholly inspired. It was indeed his chief book; and to better understand it he consulted such commentators as Henry, Clarke, and Benson. Bengel

was practically to be found in Wesley's Notes, and had therefore become a very high authority. The New Testament Father Reece knew minutely. My belief is that his favourite writer was St. Paul, and that his favourite book was the Epistle to the Ephesians ; while in his last years, as was natural, his thoughts often turned to the second Epistle to Timothy.

Methodist sermons were never read from the manuscript, although preachers were often known to write out their discourses beforehand. Father Reece's text was usually brief, and from the New Testament. Leaving Assyrian history and Oriental ethics to others, the old Methodist preacher deemed himself sent out specially to spread the "good tidings" of redemption for all, through the death and rising again of Christ. First came an exposition, then considerations on and deductions from the text, under two or three headings ; and finally the "application,"—that appeal to the hearts and consciences of hearers without which no Methodist sermon was complete. Of course sermons had to be adapted to the hearers, for to preach to an assembly of ministers, to a large congregation in a City chapel,

or to a small rural gathering—these were different tasks, and to be differently handled. In his own study I never heard him read aloud any sermons except those of great French orators like Bossuet and Massillon, and probably this was done because of the perfection of their style. In preaching he avoided topics of controversy; nor did he ever suggest doubts and then reply to them, knowing well that the doubt oft-times abides in the hearer's mind, while the solution may be forgotten. In his pastoral work he laid great stress on the "besetting sin." One or more of these being (he said) the lot of most, if not of all, it was the minister's duty daily to warn, and the hearer's duty daily to watch; nor was any phrase from St. Paul so frequently in his mouth.* He reverenced the two Sacraments as "ordained by Christ Himself," but he did not hold that any mechanical act could produce spiritual effects; and, in the conversations referred to, the phrase *opus operatum* was often in his mouth as the errors attributed to Newman and his friends were discussed. The Methodists, although bound to no special theory of

* "Sin is with man at morning break,
And through the livelong day"—KEBLE.

Baptism, were much in sympathy with Mr. Gorham in his famous contest with Bishop Philpotts.

In politics Father Reece was an "old Whig," holding to the settlement of 1689, but caring little whether Russell, Peel, or Melbourne was in power. He was far more anxious that just and righteous measures should be passed, than that this or that political party should govern. He knew from long observation that there are incurable defects in the system of party government. To the Maynooth grant (for example) he strenuously objected, as did all the Methodists. Had he lived he would have protested against the immense payment made to Maynooth out of the funds and property of the Irish Protestant Church. Nor would he have approved of the setting up of a Roman Catholic University.

His attitude to the English Church was not to be described in a few words. He said nothing to its discredit, nor would any one in his presence dare to undervalue either the institution or any of its services. Although I cannot recall conversations on the subject, I feel convinced that he did not regard himself as having left the Church of England. It was the Church of his baptism,

and he had designedly done nothing to sever the tie. He and his circle of relatives and intimate friends declined to own the title of "Dissenter" or of "Non-conformist," for there was nothing in the Prayer-book (according to the Protestant interpretation) of which they disapproved. They resorted to Church on such occasions as baptism and marriage, and especially they attended Church when absent from their homes; and beyond this, many of them at that time sent their children for confirmation. The Methodist organisation, although self-governing, was so far from being hostile to the Established Church that it was not even wholly detached; and any one who liked might belong to both Chapel and Church.

Father Reece not infrequently went to Church in the afternoon of Sunday; and if he did not go regularly, he went oftener than did the great Lord Eldon, who was (said a critic) an *external* supporter of the Church, "a buttress and not a pillar." Whether this position was logical is a question which may rest until it be decided whether John Wesley's position was logical.

Father Reece was a strong advocate of temperance in all things; and although he

did not refuse a single glass of wine or beer, he had a strong opinion that the tendency was to eat and drink too much, and to resort to idle and too exciting amusements. His notion of fasting was to abstain from superfluities, and to choose the simplest food. "Fast from luxury, and fast from sin," was his reply to me, when asked whether fasting was necessary. Of the use of tobacco, snuff, or ardent spirits he, like Wesley, always disapproved. It has been mentioned that this temperate and abstemious man, almost a giant in stature and in strength, loved the habit of early rising, and strove, with small success, to revive prayer-meetings at sunrise.

Father Reece, though full of respect for the old parish church, held with Wesley that worship could as well be offered in a modern and unconsecrated chapel. Wesley did not admit that Consecration was an ancient, or a legal, or a necessary function.* Had they lived they would have attached still less value to consecration, when they found that the sites of many City churches were being, with episcopal sanction, covered with offices and warehouses. The building was, according to the Methodists, amply

* See Tyerman, vol. iii. p. 513.

consecrated by the worship offered within its walls ; and this agrees with the language of one of the Anglican hymns :—

“ Jesus, where’er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy-seat ;
Where’er they seek Thee Thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”*

As to the sacred Ministry, he held (following Wesley) that there might be a variety of agents — “ Evangelists and Teachers,” as well as the higher ranks, being specified by St. Paul.

There was no doubt as to those whom Father Reece regarded as his brethren in Christ. The formula in the Prayer-book is precise and clear. It embraces (1) all who profess and call themselves Christians; (2) who are found in the way of truth; (3) who hold the faith in unity of spirit and the bond of peace; and (4) in righteousness of life. The Collect for the 3rd Sunday after Easter also marked out those who “ are admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s religion.”

Next in the Creed to “ the Holy Catholic Church ” came, as Father Reece was wont to say, “ the Communion of Saints.” This

* “ Hymns Ancient and Modern,” 529.

was meeting with good people, and joining them in prayer; and here he was in agreement with an eminent man of a very different school.* But the most perfect realisation of “the communion of saints” was (he said) to be found in the Class-meeting.

As this Chapter is for the information of those who have small knowledge of Methodism, it is well to mention two other peculiar meetings—the Love-feast and the Watch-night.

Both were taken by Wesley from that Primitive Church of Carthage which he had diligently studied. The love-feast was not open to the public—it was a symbol of brotherhood amongst the members, and sometimes a few other persons were admitted by ticket. This and every other meeting began and ended with a hymn and extemporary prayer. A minister sat in the pulpit, and after portions of bread and water had been handed round† and

* J. H. Newman wrote thus: “What is prayer but communion? To pray together is to be in the same communion.” “Life of Dr. Pusey” vol. iv. p. 138.

† It is interesting to find this brotherly distribution of bread in great cathedrals at Paris and elsewhere.

partaken of by all present, he called on such as chose to speak on spiritual things. Some tact was required in presiding over a love-feast, for it was quite possible that an uneducated and enthusiastic man or woman might wander on at length, or irrelevantly. While Father Reece was living at Pentonville I was present at morning service in a large chapel when a thoughtful and scholarly sermon was preached on a vision of Ezekiel—"A wheel within a wheel," the moral being that men must trust implicitly to God, and not hope with their feeble powers to understand His ways and works. In the afternoon the same preacher (John Farrar) sat in the pulpit at a love-feast, when a fluent old woman got up, and referring to the morning's discourse spoke thus: "It may be a mystery to some, but bless the Lord it is none to me—He has made me to understand the wheels within wheels!"

Class-meetings have already been described with sufficient minuteness. There was little variety in them, whether conducted by a minister or by the ordinary leader. At intervals the members of the Society were invited to stay for a special devotional meeting in chapel, at the close of the

evening service. Once a year there came a much larger gathering which stood quite alone, and to which all the members, with their families, went who were able to face the night breezes of winter. The "Watch-night" was held in every large chapel on the last evening of the year,* and many went to it, and still go, who are otherwise strangers. Like the love-feast, this was the revival of a Primitive-Church usage, but unlike it, was not limited to members of the Society. This service begins about ten o'clock or later on the night of the 31st of December. There are hymns and prayers, and short discourses strictly adapted to the occasion—perhaps "Meditations" would be a more suitable word. A few minutes before midnight all engage in silent prayer. It is an impressive moment when the minister who conducts the service announces the beginning of a new year by giving out the accustomed hymn :—

"Come let us anew, our journey pursue," &c.

A few days later came another service of

* Early in the century it appears to have been held about once a quarter.

much solemnity, known as the "Renewal of the Covenant."

It is interesting to note that the Methodist watch-night is now largely imitated in the various churches and chapels of England. Here and in a few minor details there has been some approach to Methodistic usage.

On the other hand there has been an advance on the part of the Methodists towards many Church usages. In Father Reece's time the Common Prayer-book was used only in the larger of the chapels, and chiefly in London. There were few organs, and there was none even at City Road, the premier chapel. The psalmody was of indifferent, often uncouth character. Christmas Day and Good Friday, Easter Day and Ascension Day, were slightly if at all observed. If Christians are one in hope and faith, why should they not approximate in the less important points?

Father Reece, however, had small regard for merely external matters; and like John Keble he despised the details of a fast-extending ritualism. He only thought of the common Faith and Hope of the Christian communities. His teaching as to the oneness of Christians cannot be distinguished

from that of a typical Anglican of our own day, who propounds a question, and gives the answer thus :—*

“ In what sense are Christians one ? ”

“ They are one as one body or organisation, made up no doubt of a multitude of differing individual members, but all bound into one, under Christ for their Head, by the fact that the ONE SPIRIT, which is Christ’s supreme gift, is imparted to the whole organisation, and every member of it : and this common corporate life, where the elements are so different, is made possible by the ONE HOPE reaching forward into an eternal world, which was set before them all when they received their call into the body of Christ.”

Early Methodism is by some hasty observers deemed to have sprung from Puritanism. It is more correct to say that Wesley, as a theologian and preacher, was the outcome of the old Anglicanism represented by Nelson, Bishop Wilson, and Dr. Horneck, and by William Law in his early days. The old Methodists did not read the Puritan writers—Bunyan excepted

* Canon Gore on the Epistle to the Ephesians, p. 143.

—until Dr. Jackson, by re-editing, brought some of them into some degree of notice.

They had indeed a few usages which resembled Puritan usages. They disapproved of gay clothing, and of luxury of living. They believed so firmly in an all-directing Providence that they acknowledged God in all their ways, even in their common daily life, and would not make any engagement without adding “If the Lord will.” Then their common use of Scriptural language was observable—it was not mere mannerism, still less was it cant. It was the natural result of a close and familiar knowledge of the words of Holy Writ; for what a man has intertwined through and around his heart and memory will find expression in his language. Thus Father Reece, who had his New Testament (to say nothing of the Old) almost by heart, rarely conversed without making shorter or longer quotations from Scripture. And this was the case with his compeers, and cotemporaries of either sex.

“Plying their daily task with busier feet,”

Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.”

KEBLE.

CHAPTER VII

THE CLOSE OF LIFE, AND THE FUNERAL SERMON

FATHER REECE'S active career closed in the summer of 1846, when he was placed on the Supernumerary list, being now free to reside where he chose, and having no onerous duties to perform. He had lost his wife, and he now lost his unmarried daughter Dora; and he would have been left alone in the world, but that one of his young granddaughters, now Mrs. A. M. Rowe, volunteered to act as mistress of his house at Pentonville. His son at that date lived not far away, and was able to see him frequently. As Supernumerary he gave, according to custom, some help to the regular ministers of the circuit; but the time was past when he could officiate in large chapels, or go long distances.

During this last sojourn in London much was seen of George Browne MacDonald, popular as a minister, the father of a clever family, and the grandfather of Rudyard Kipling. I recollect him only in the social circle as a teller of humorous stories ; and once heard him amuse a party, many of his brethren among them, by a burlesque argument to prove that the human race once had tails. There were several garbled extracts from the poets, and the following was one of his convincing proofs :—

“ Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.”

Dr. R. Alder was now often met with, a missionary secretary of imposing mien, whose remarkable likeness to King George IV. gave rise to many surmises. At a later date he left the Connexion, and ended his days in a colonial chaplaincy.

Less clearly remembered are his colleagues, Dr. Beecham and Dr. Hoole, also often found in the circles frequented by Father Reece. Another notable man was John Lomas, small and light-complexioned, with a beautifully clear voice, the very model of a

scholarly and argumentative preacher. Thirty years earlier Father Reece had noted in his Almanack that Lomas was the most promising young man in the Connexion. Perhaps the youngest of the group was its surviving member, Dr. B. Gregory, who, like Beecham and Lomas, in due time worthily attained to the President's chair.

At this time also there arose a closer intimacy with Joseph Beaumont, M.D., who had a rare power of attracting friends, although he did not always care to exercise it. In private life he was charming and humorous. His sermons had great force and originality. For many minutes after beginning a discourse his delivery would be slow, hesitating, even embarrassed. After a while he warmed, and his rich imagination and his singular powers of language then began to tell—he did not write poetry, but often did he speak it. As to Connexional policy he often disagreed with Dr. Bunting; but he was incapable of any complicity in a mean and underhand warfare at which it is now necessary to glance.

Dr. Bunting, still active, resided in Penton-

ville, near to Father Reece. Jealousy of his pre-eminence now took the form of anonymous attacks lasting for two or three years or more. His assailants sent far and wide small tractates accusing him of "dictatorship" and of misgovernment. Who really wrote the "Flysheets" was never known with certainty, nor is it of any moment to inquire. They were of importance not for anything they contained, but because they caused much disquiet and excitement, ending in the secession of many thousands of members. There were three ministers who were suspected of complicity in the agitation, and who were interrogated by the Conference. French law allows of questions being put from the bench to the accused; but the three ministers preferred to take their stand on the jurisprudence of England, which strictly forbids it. As they refused to reply to questions, they were found guilty of contumacy, and were finally expelled. What has been here very briefly stated in fact occupied the minds of the Methodist community for several years.

It was a coincidence that the three preachers in question, Messrs. Everett, Dunn, and Griffith had at various times

been on very intimate terms with Father Reece. The youngest of them (Griffith) had often at Sheffield carried me about on his shoulder. But quite apart from old comradeship, Father Reece was deeply pained by the "Flysheet" controversy and the ensuing agitation. In speaking of it he expressed his hope (not to be fulfilled) that moderate counsels would on all sides prevail, and that secession would be averted. His anxiety on this point must be mentioned in order to explain one passage in the funeral sermon preached after his death by Dr. Beaumont.

In September, 1849, Father Reece gave up housekeeping at Pentonville; and his last change of abode was now made, to his son's convenient and pleasantly placed house in St. John's Wood. To him was allotted a cheerful room on the first floor, overlooking the great cricket ground of the Marylebone Club; and here his books (few of them modern) were for the last time arranged. He now and then preached in some of the smaller chapels, and met some of the classes, but otherwise he for the first time in his long life was able to enjoy leisure. I remember more than once going with him to the afternoon service at Christ Church,

Albany Street. One Sunday morning in the splendid Church of St. Stephen, Walbrook, we heard a sermon from Dr. George Croly. At its close Father Reece turned to me, and in a very loud whisper said, "That man ought to be made a bishop." In London he had children and grandchildren within reach, and he seemed to enjoy rest and tranquillity.

It was at the very end of the winter that his last illness began. He was attended by the late Dr. C. B. Radcliffe, who brought in Dr. Paris, a physician then at the head of the profession; but there was no specific disorder which medical skill could encounter—it was failure of vitality, and incurable. He was quite willing to attain to the reward of his long labours. "The doctors try to keep me here," he said, "but I wish to depart." The best record of his closing days will be found in the Funeral Sermon by Dr. Beaumont.

Father Reece, surrounded by those who loved him, died four days after William Wordsworth, that is to say, on the 27th of April, 1850. As May opened a large number of his old colleagues and friends gathered to pay their last mark of esteem—many of them are mentioned in these pages. Before the

funeral procession was formed there was a brief service at the house in Cavendish Road West. A lesson was read by William Arthur, a young minister of whom great hopes were entertained. He has fulfilled them all, and now lives in retirement after many laborious years.

The chapter chosen as a lesson was that wonderful one, St. John xiv; and there was a strange fitness and impressiveness when Mr. Arthur uttered the final words, "Arise, let us go hence." The long procession formed, and all that was left of Wesley's last working preacher was laid in the fine cemetery at Highgate, where rest the remains of S. T. Coleridge the poet-philosopher, and of Frederick D. Maurice, and of other good and famous men whose "souls are in the hand of God."

I thought again and again of the words, "Arise, let us go hence," and they sounded in my ears like a knell throughout that week, at the end of which I departed for Ireland, there to remain in the public service for twenty-six years. Nothing reconciled me to this banishment so much as the thought that if I remained in England I could see and converse with Father Reece no more.

The Funeral Sermon was preached (at the request of the Leaders' Meeting) at Great Queen Street Chapel on Sunday, June 9, 1850. Dr. Beaumont, who had seen much of Father Reece of late years, and had visited him in his last illness, was the preacher: and the text was, “Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?” There was a vast crowd assembled, and according to old Methodist usage there were ejaculations and murmurs of assent, now and again, at the close of some powerful passage. This sermon sketched briefly and sympathetically the career of Father Reece, from his first spiritual awakening to the end of his honoured life.

As it is better to adopt Dr. Beaumont’s own language in describing the last days of his venerable friend, I venture to take the remaining pages of this Chapter from the Funeral Sermon.

Dr. Beaumont said that a few days before the final scene Father Reece, referring to some business matter, said, “Let me see this done, and then my language would be, ‘Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.’ And this he said in the

attitude and tone of earnest devotion, lifting up his hands and eyes. He further said, ‘My mind is very happy; Christ is unspeakably precious; and the intercourse is open between me and heaven.’ ‘For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,’ was his confession of faith to one of his family. Writing to a friend (by an amanuensis), he said, ‘My health is not much improved, but I am kept in perfect peace, and my hope of heaven is triumphant. I calmly wait His will who was the guide of my youth, and whose loving-kindness has been my satisfying portion in matured life: my fellowship with Christ is uninterrupted, and my prospect without a cloud.’ To another he said, ‘My time is spent in prayer and praise.’ On hearing a chapter to the Ephesians read he remarked, ‘What a gospel for making the world happy!’ To another friend he said, ‘I have fought a good fight; I have kept the faith.’ He called the members of the family and the domestics into his room, and they received his blessing, severally, in a very impressive manner, his remarks being most appropriate to each; and then, requesting his son to commend them all to God, he joined with great fervour in the devotions

that were offered. On the evening of the same day he prayed aloud most earnestly as his strength permitted, specifying the various branches of the family, and particularising their relations and cases. He also blessed his grandchildren, and prayed that they might be converted and have new hearts.

“The great enemy, he said, had not been permitted to buffet him. ‘I am gradually sinking—I am sinking to rise. I have shut out the world, and concentrated my thoughts on one object.’ On being asked if he had any pain, he said ‘No, but I have great peace, and I bless my Saviour for His succour. I am so happy in my soul as to be indifferent to bodily pain.’ The night of Wednesday, three nights before his decease, was one of much suffering, but he was earnestly praising God, saying, ‘Honour and thanks and blessing to Jesus.’ On being asked whether in the midst of the sufferings of the previous night he had had much consolation, he replied with unusual animation, ‘Sufferings? I have had no sufferings. Blessed Jesus! His consolations have abounded, increased, overcome!’ He spoke repeatedly of ‘perfect love’; of ‘perfect love,’ as indicating his experience

as well as his pursuit—‘perfect peace and purity and love.’ He frequently said, ‘Jesus is all—Christ is all, is all and in all. All I have and all I am are His—all I have and all I am !’

“It was felt by the members of his family that—

“‘The chamber where the good man meets his fate
Is privileg’d beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite on the verge of heaven.’

“His whole spirit and demeanour throughout his affliction were of the tenderest and meekest character, and the devout thankfulness with which he received and acknowledged every attention was most conspicuous.

“On one of my interviews with him, I reminded him of the gospel verities, and engaged in prayer, in which he most cordially acquiesced. He remarked that evening, ‘I am washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.’ He repeatedly offered up the following prayer : ‘Witnessing Spirit—witnessing Spirit, witness to the world ; awaken the people; convert the people, witnessing Spirit !’ To one who said, ‘I grieve to see you in such a weak state, but all will be well,’ he raised his eyes, and said,

‘All is well.’ It being said he would soon be in heaven, he placed his hand on his breast, and said distinctly, ‘It is here—I have it here.’ On the last Sunday of his life he said, ‘I hoped to have been in paradise to-day.’ His expressions of thankfulness and confidence were frequent.—‘Blessed be His name for succour, and for comfort, and for hope. I am kept in such perfect peace. I have perfect love and perfect joy. I owe all to Him, to His merit, to His mercy. I offer all back to Him.’ He repeated the lines :—

“ ‘ ‘ ‘Tis Jesus the first and the last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home ;
We’ll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that’s to come.’

‘The doctors and I are pulling different ways; they wish to keep me here, and I want to go home.’

“ His last night was one of much suffering, and he prayed earnestly, urging frequently these words, ‘Pardon, accept, heal, complete.’ The last connected sentence that he uttered was, ‘I am going to be for ever with the Lord—for ever—for ever with the Lord !’ And on Saturday morning, 27th

April, he exchanged mortality for life, and had administered to him, I cannot doubt, an abundant entrance into the unsuffering and everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. ‘For they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.’

“Mr. Reece was one of this number; he belonged to this rare and exalted class. We do not contemplate a long list of sciences and literary acquirements, which may be eagerly and successfully studied and pursued, where the true wisdom is entirely absent. Yea, it is possible to waste a man’s life and vigour in unprofitable speculations amidst the multiplicity of religious truths themselves, and ‘at his end to be a fool.’ But the wisdom of our departed father was truly ‘from above’; the nature of which is accurately marked and sanctioned by the book of God, the Judge. He was intellectually wise, religiously wise, and spiritually wise. He obtained deliverance from the wrath to come: the pure image of God was deeply stamped upon his soul: universal personal holiness was his preference, his bent, his ambition, his ex-

perience. He longed for the intimacies of divine love, friendship, and fellowship; to converse often and much with the living God. He rose, through unspeakable grace, to such victory, purity, and elevation of hope and pleasure, that he wrought without ceasing for the welfare and prosperity of Zion, and he was deeply sensible to the concerns and dangers of men around him. He sought sincerely and affectionately throughout his protracted ministry to do them good. He had learned the true way of it—to hate their sins, and pity their persons—to bear their unjust malignity, and yet pull them out of the fire; to hope in their behalf against hope; to persevere in the patient sweetness and power of well-doing; to overcome all possible evil with good. He knew the way of rightly enduring evil; and, as we have seen, of overcoming death. He laid up in store beforehand the furniture of wisdom and the armour of strength. He savoured and inwardly digested the great truths and commandments of God; he surveyed them on all sides; he distinguished and penetrated deeply into sacred truth, and while he derived from it exalted pleasure, turned it to the most important

practical uses. He wisely confined his chief attention to the most essential truths and duties; while many capable men are a kind of open thoroughfare for everything that comes. Such truths formed the great staple of his preaching, which, though not distinguished by finely balanced rhetoric or quick flowing oratory, was clear, weighty, and eminently spiritual. He was a master in Israel, who declared the whole counsel of God, speaking to the awakening of sinners and to the edification and comfort of Christians. He had dignity and authority, pure from the taint of vanity and silly affectation. The light of his teaching had a solemn, commanding, and awakening character, and yet, where submitted to and improved, a tender, purifying, and comforting sweetness which heals and gives rest to the soul.

“ And now, I presume, many of you from these statements, recognise in some degree, the portraiture of the excellent pastor gone from amongst us; some of you, perhaps more distinctly than before, are led to perceive the reasons and reasonableness of the attachment you have felt. To him belonged an eminence of spiritual wisdom,

which wrought its way against some disadvantages, and maintained its hold of many hearts in this and many other places."

Dr. Beaumont closed his sermon with the following striking passages :—

"Indeed he was a burning and a shining light, and many rejoiced in his light. Nor ought I to omit to mention his sanction and support of the Temperance cause. He was eminently a good citizen, an enlightened philanthropist, a conscientious and zealous supporter of such institutions as promoted public order and public morals, and tended to general and national improvement and happiness. Intemperance he regarded as a giant evil, and he approved of the movement to discountenance and uproot so devastating and demoralising a habit. His influence was considerable amongst our community. He was regarded as one that ruled well, and who, in the exercise of authority, was remarkable for prudence and firmness. He was opposed to innovation and change, church order and discipline being greatly regarded by him, but he was no bigot, and was far from being severe ; and while he was grieved and his health evidently affected by the prevailing agitation, he was equally

averse to violent measures being resorted to on the other side, which might irritate, instead of restoring peace ; he saw that in a time of intense excitement* the expulsion of members increased their capacity and inclination to extend the mischief which was sought to be remedied. He was a peacemaker. Oh, may his mantle be caught by his survivors ! Peace be within our walls and prosperity upon our Zion. The Lord reigneth—He sitteth above the water floods. He remaineth King for ever.

“ Behold our departed friend—his catholic charity, his vast forbearance, his tender solicitude ! Behold him amidst the decay of age ! How strong in faith ! how spiritual in affection and desire ! how dead to sin and the world ! how vigorous in self-denial ! how skilful in divine things ! how foremost in charity ! how humble, meek, resigned, hopeful ! The tree of his life was loaded with fruit ; fresh in its leaves, stately in its branches, mellow in its fruit ; ripe for the soil and climate of heaven, where, transplanted by the hand of the great vinedresser, it will bloom for ever in the paradise of God.”

* Referred to on page 96, *ante*.

APPENDIX I

PORTRAITURE

1. The first known portrait of Richard Reece was a somewhat rough engraving by an unknown hand which appears in the magazine then called the *Arminian Magazine*, of 1791. It was taken at the age of twenty-two; and it is singular that a young preacher's portrait should be given so early—he must, by the conductors of the magazine, have been regarded as a youth of great promise.

2. In the Magazine of 1797 appears a very much better work of art, bearing the name of W. Ridley, an engraver of some eminence. This represents a handsome man of thirty-two, with long dark hair; and a copy of it forms the frontispiece to this volume.

3. The standard likeness of Mr. Reece, taken when he was still in the prime of life, is of course that by the famous portrait-painter, John Jackson, R.A. This artist was a Yorkshireman and a rival of Sir Thomas Lawrence, and

had a fine career before him ; but he died as he was nearing the summit of his profession, and there are many to this day who consider his work at least equal to that of the distinguished President of the Royal Academy. This portrait is life size, with a dark background, and in an oval frame ; and it is now the property of Mrs. Mary Reece Radcliffe—Father Reece's granddaughter. The copy before me has been evidently cut out from a volume of the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*. It purports to have been engraved by W. T. Fry for the Wesleyan Book Committee, and a reproduction is given in these pages.

4. During Mr. Reece's visit to the United States in 1824 another life - size portrait was painted by an American artist whose name is forgotten. It is dull, flat, and realistic, a great contrast to the brilliant work of Jackson. The same American artist may have painted Freeborn Garrettson, with whom Father Reece formed a strict friendship in 1824. These two pictures, though not very interesting as works of art, were long in the dining-room at Cavendish Road West, the residence of the late R. Marsden Reece, in which Father Reece died in 1850.

5. About the year 1835 another life - size portrait in oils was executed by Mrs. M. Pearson, also engraved for the Magazine. Mr. Reece is represented as a handsome old man, but rather

too florid and aldermanic, and he is seated in a red leather armchair. This was given to his daughter Martha, the wife of Mr. L. A. Durieu.

6. About the year 1840 another life-size portrait was painted by the late Mr. G. P. Green, the husband of Mrs. Everett Green. It is now in the hands of Mrs. A. M. Rowe, another granddaughter.

7. A spirited sketch came out about the same time, or a little later, as one of many illustrations to a collection of pen and pencil sketches of eminent Wesleyan ministers, published in numbers, two or three subjects to a number. Father Reece is drawn as sitting sideways, almost in profile, and with folded arms, a favourite attitude of his. The artist was J. Wood and the engraver, Greatbach. There is much vigour in this small engraving, which appears to be the latest portrait of Father Reece. It is therefore reproduced in the present volume.

8. His notable figure may perhaps be found in engravings of groups. For instance, in the well-known engraving of the Centenary group, 1839-40, he is standing on the platform, by no means a flattering or even a just likeness, still very recognisable. In the same group a careful search may discover two of the brothers of Mrs. Reece, George and John Marsden. This large picture is not a fine piece of work, but it has a certain historical value.

APPENDIX II

SOME OF FATHER REECE'S ALMANACK NOTES, RANGING BETWEEN 1805 AND 1829

Father Reece does not seem to have kept a regular Journal ; but many Almanacks have been found, on the interleaved pages of which are his notes on a variety of topics. Any biographer must find himself hampered by the present condition of these Almanacks, from which many of the interleaved pages have been at some time torn out. The series is very incomplete ; in fact, the Almanacks are forthcoming only for the following years :—1805, 1808, 1810, 1815 to 1819, and lastly from 1821 to 1829 inclusive.

In addition to the fragmentary state of these books, there is the further difficulty that a large portion, about half of the entire, is in a kind of (illegible) shorthand. As may be expected, shorthand is used largely where things are noted affecting the conduct or character of individuals. On the other hand, the records of journeys, meetings, and public events, are clearly

written. The Almanacks are of uniform size, but not of uniform origin. The earlier ones are Moore's, dealing with astrology, and containing much which (to use a Gladstonian phrase) is "worthless trash." The later books, edited by a Mr. Rogerson, are quite free from such defects. There is (or was) much interleaving in all of them.

The most complete years, or those when fewest pages have perished, are 1805, 1824, and 1829. Taking the first period, 1805–1819, the notes on family matters are very numerous—births of children, and the deaths of two of them in infancy, Catherine and Benjamin; many touching references to the eldest, Eliza, a most promising girl, who died in 1814. Many public events are noticed, the war with France, Trafalgar and the death of Nelson; but strange to say, the pages relating to later wars, the Peninsula and Waterloo, have perished. There are several notes about Lord Melville, his demerits and impeachment, and about the movement for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade; many notes about the progress of the Bible Society and the Tract Society, two associations in which Mr. Reece took a special interest. . . . There is much about schools of various kinds, sermons on behalf of schools, and good collections. The two Methodist schools are often mentioned—Woodhouse Grove near Leeds, to

which his only son, R. M. Reece, was sent, and Kingswood, near Bristol. It is curious to note that the latter was, as it had been in Wesley's time, a source of anxiety.

In all these books—1805 to 1829—there are notes of the greater assemblies, Conferences, District and Quarterly Meetings. Sometimes difficulties occur, as when the Stationing Committee put down Brother B. for two places successively, and strong protests came up from both. Now and then a question arises as to the orthodoxy, on some minute point, of a minister; and in this way Dr. Adam Clarke and Daniel Isaacs are named. Now and then there is something far more serious; but here short-hand is largely used.

Father Reece notes that he never, in his own case, interferes in the choosing of a Circuit—leaving that to Providence and the Stationing Committee. [Of all the Circuits it may be argued from what is said and from what is unsaid, that he liked Bath and Manchester the most, then Leeds; and that of all of them he cared least for Birmingham and South London.] After the revival of the Mission cause (noted in the text) he seems every year to have gone on a preaching tour on behalf of Missions, and often he adds the amount of the collections, which seem large. [This is the topic on which he feels most deeply; and if he had been a younger man

he might have offered himself for missionary work. But Missionary and Bible Meetings are only some of the meetings which he attended—they are simply beyond count.]

Throughout the notes it is observable that he writes with affection of his parents, and visited them at least annually. He often mentions his son and three surviving daughters, as to whom his chief anxiety was that they should be devoted servants of the Lord; secondly, that they should be well-educated. [Beyond those two points his thoughts did not travel. He would have made any sacrifice to further these ends; and the sacrifices he did make as to the education of his children were remarkable in the case of a man of very limited income. All this showed a fine and unworldly spirit.]

The second consignment of Almanacks noted by Father Reece which has reached me covers the period from January, 1821, to the end of 1829.

1821. At Leeds. 25th of January, wedding of his daughter Mary at the old church. Rev. W. Marsden, her uncle, officiated. He adds, "The intellectual and moral qualities of Mary raise her above others of her age, and amply repay pains and expense on her education." The couple went to Manchester first. February 5th. At Hull, preaching for Sunday Schools. . . . Then

to Whitby. . . . Much interest about Missions. . . . Pickering, Yorks, rather dark, long tracts without any place of worship. "The venerable and excellent Mr. Benson died now in peace—a shining light." August. At Christlington. Tombs of the Hodsons; his mother Catherine's father was Peter—knew him. . . . He died in 1777, aged 79, a man of singular probity, industry, and honour; he accumulated wealth, now divided amongst the family. September 3rd. Left Leeds for Bath. Saw at Wellow a Roman station, large villa, pavement—baths—just discovered. November. Some meetings at Lady Huntingdon's chapel. Christmas Day. Service at 6.0 a.m. Floods in December, 50 inches of water in the houses in that part of Bath.

1822. Falmouth, Exeter, &c. . . . Cold and sore throat. . . . Truro, Plymouth. Missioning again. Cough continues. Brother Watson could not come, being ill, much disappointment. April. Missionary tour, Jersey—rough voyage from Weymouth. Services going on well, French and English. Guernsey. Saw two Cromlechs . . . back—thirty hours packet to Weymouth. . . . August 1st. Conference, Dr. Clarke president. Increase 12,600. Near Salisbury, opened a new chapel and saw Stonehenge.

1823. Not satisfied with state of Kingswood School. Something like a revival at Bath and neighbourhood. Missionary meetings — Dr.

Clarke present, and Mr. Squance. . . . "Public mind is excited about Missions, and at a meeting the collection was £110—at Walcot. [Many notes here of what the missionary told about the Ceylon and Hindoo religions.] Saw a hymn book which Wesley had given to a Mrs. Wathen on the 22nd of February, 1791, a few days before his death—his writing, strange to say, firm and regular, although other writing of earlier date not so. . . . In May a Mission Festival in London, Dr. A. Clarke and Mr. Jay, of Bath, the chief speakers. Then to Salisbury, where the cause is declining; and then to Leeds to preach for the Tract Society. At the Conference a sad accident, coach overturned, two preachers killed and six injured, going to conference. R. R. is now chosen to go to America, and he chose Brother Hannah to go with him. Hints that it would not do to allow Mr. B. to become the *fac totum*. (Apropos of some changes in editorship, &c.)

1823. October. At Kingswood School found the state of the boys not satisfactory—head-master to be changed. Baptists in Bath are sowing tares among the young. . . . November. Floods again in Bath. . . . many lives lost, poor taking refuge in King Street Chapel vestries. . . . stewards resolve to find us another house—the old house was four times flooded in three winters. . . . Difficulty of supply while away on the

American tours. . . . Finds next February the best time to go. . . . December 1st. Reviews matters as usual on his birthday; is "comfortable, with few troubles," and thankful. . . . The work prospers. There is persecution in Barbadoes.

1824. [The most interesting of these diaries, for it contains notes of the American journey.] He saw his aged parents and also his son before embarking, about February 15th, at Liverpool, in the sailing ship *Columbia*. . . . The weather was bad for several days. On the 22nd he held services on board, and noted that his thoughts were much with his family at Bath. There was "wantonness and folly" in some of the passengers [perhaps they only smoked and played cards]. Then stormy weather again for several days. . . . They landed on the 10th of March, and remained several days at New York, thence proceeding by steamer to Boston. [This is, I think, the first mention of a steamer.] Rather a full note of Yale College and its professors. On the 2nd of April they reached Philadelphia, where they called on Mr. Pillmore, who had been sent out by Wesley [in 1769, as appears by Wesley's Journal]. Mr. Pillmore was now a vigorous and cheerful old man, 87 years of age, and had long been an ordained clergyman. At Washington heard a debate in the Senate, and made the acquaintance of General Jackson, afterwards President of the United States. Then came the

Conference at Winchester, Virginia, a "tedious and boisterous" assembly. He speaks in terms of praise of some Indians with whom he met, esteeming them as men of high intellectual and religious attainments, yet "of a race going fast to extinction." There was the Baltimore Conference, of more harmonious kind; and finally they embarked on the 8th of June, at New York, in the *Corinthian* packet, many friends seeing them off with much kindness. Of all the places visited, Harper's Ferry, now historical, seems to have struck him as the best scenery. Of many people he speaks in high terms, still he remarks severely on the amount of freedom used in debate, and shown often in "insulting the bishops." . . . The voyage home seems to have been rapid and agreeable. . . . Then began again the round of meetings, committees, and missionary festivals. The year closes with the loss of two attached friends at Bath, Mr. Hadsen, who was "buried in the Abbey Church, six inches below the surface," and Mr. F. Shum, "a burning light," and the best of all the Bath Methodists.

1825. He is now stationed at Southwark and Lambeth, and gives a poor account of the people in the latter. Attended the funeral of Mr. Griffith (an ex-President), and noted that Wesley's own coffin was dilapidated, "pieces of it being taken away as curiosities." Letter to Mr. Moore, advising a "strong oaken case"

as an outside covering. To Norwich on a missionary tour . . . alarm caused by smallpox, from which his daughter Dora suffered, though happily she recovered. Revisits Bath and finds the Baptists trying to supplant the Methodists in villages. The winter begins early, and is severe; toilsome journeys and exposure to cold. . . . The year closes with the failure of banks, and much trouble and anxiety in all business circles.

1826. These troubles increased and are frequently mentioned, as they involved many members of society. Mr. Butterworth, M.P., a leading layman, strongly opposed, spends a large sum over the Dover election, and finally becomes feverish, and dies "the victim of a contested election"—a self-made man who left a large fortune. At the Conference Mr. Watson, the President, appears unwell, "weak and fatigued"; but then a very unpleasant business had arisen—the venerable H. Moore (doubtless under advice) refused to quit the City Road house, and demanded various privileges and an income—"under Wesley's will." [The Conference all divided on this, and Mr. Watson's depressed state is quite accounted for. There is much discussion, and the "humiliating, unpleasant task of sitting in judgment" on Mr. Moore follows at a special meeting after Conference. Another source of trouble is the indebted state of the Book Committee.]

1827. Opens a chapel at Kennington, with the aid of Thomas Farmer, Esq. References to Mr. Moore's case, showing doubts whether he had been fairly treated. Many notes on Missions and preaching tours to help them, at Chichester and elsewhere. . . . Describes Battle, and opens a chapel there, adding details of the history of Sir G. Webster's family. . . . Attends Bible Society meeting and mentions a dispute as to inclusion of the Apocrypha. . . . Visits Bedfordshire, and sits in John Bunyan's chair. . . . Heard Robert Hall preach; "his voice did not half fill the place." . . . In July goes to the north and visits his aged parents. . . . In Manchester found party spirit running high about Mr. Moore's case [which case seems to have been finally arranged without a lawsuit]. There is a brief reference to Dr. Warren's case now arising. Mr. Stephens, an opponent of Mr. Moore, elected President by a majority of nine only. The Leeds people have a "crisis"; they want an organ, but it is strongly opposed, and is against the rules. "The Lord sitteth above the waterfloods." An interesting letter from Miss Garrettson about her father, "for fifty years a burning and a shining light" in the United States.

1828. The year opens at Queen Street, London, where congregations are good, but "discipline is lax, and a worldly spirit is found in our more prosperous people." . . . In March

a missionary preaching tour in Cornwall. . . . At the District Meeting in May attempts made to bring in the organ question, which had caused violent dissensions at Leeds. Some notes about new efforts being made to revive Popery in England. Also notes, not flattering, on the local preachers, who are "full of conceit and impatient of any control," especially since the disturbance arose at Leeds. [The pages about the Conference of 1828 are missing.]

1829. In January has cold and hoarseness [not to be wondered at in one who habitually travelled by night as an outside passenger]. Notes of a revival at Hinde Street; "call it what you will, effects prove agency, and God is in it: holiness and happiness can be produced by no other power." . . . An account of the burning of the choir at York by a lunatic. . . . Agitation through the country about the Catholic Claims, but the petitions are chiefly against the Bill. . . . Spoke strongly at a leaders' meeting against much meddling with party politics. . . . In April heard Edward Irving "expounding and applying the prophecies in the Apocalypse-opening of the Seven Seals. "Is he a prophet or merely an enthusiast?" Disaster and civil war are predicted. . . . The Upper House has passed the Bill. . . . A probable result is that "our National Church will be superseded." . . . "But we can bear much if the Lord be on our side! In April

a Jersey and Guernsey trip ; the passages were from and to Weymouth, and the *Ariadne* steam-packet (*sic*) took 28 hours over one voyage. . . . In rainy weather returned from Weymouth, as usual, outside—the horses got into a ditch and were nearly drowned and coach nearly overturned, but all ended well. Then come the May meetings—Missions flourishing, and the Bible Society “doing incalculable good.” “High Calvinism takes its stand on platforms” [but I venture to think him in error when he couples Antinomianism with the names of McNeile and Noel]. These speakers interpret prophecies, and look for the Millennium; whereas it would do more good were they to preach the Gospel to sinners. In July he once more visited his parents [then 84 years of age]. August 2nd. Was much affected by news of the dangerous illness of John Lomas, “our most gifted young man” [he happily recovered, and had a long and useful career]. In Southwark things in a deplorable state, many local preachers and leaders resigned, and classes broken up; and many others waiting to see what the Conference will do about Leeds and the organ controversy. In November a missionary preaching tour in the southern counties ; collections improved, but “more zeal wanted.” In town many disputes and much party feeling. . . . There was a virulent pamphlet, and Eckett in the quarterly meeting

defended it in a two hours' speech. . . . The "spirit of faction" prevails—"mild men become furious, and simple men are made cunning and crafty." . . . "Lord keep Thy people, and save us from the storm." . . . At Southwark eleven local preachers have seceded and hired chapels. . . . There must be all possible forbearance, and he will not consent to expel hundreds of innocent and pious people, although they are deluded. [It is not very clear, but the Leeds organ appears to have been the cause of this confusion. The Conference settled the matter by allowing "local option" as to organs; but there was a secession on the part of Eckett and considerable numbers of office-bearers and members. The rest of the story cannot be given, as the latest Almanack forthcoming is this for the year 1829].

APPENDIX III

PRESIDENTS OF THE CONFERENCE FROM 1791-1881

[The following list is added because of the large number of names appearing in it which have been mentioned in the preceding pages. A date within brackets signifies another year of Presidency. From the first Conference in 1744 down to that of 1790, the chair was, of course, occupied by John Wesley.]

DATE.	PLACE.	PRESIDENT.
1791	Manchester	Thompson, Rev. W., d. 1799.
1792	London	Mather, Rev. Alex., d. 1800.
1793	Leeds	Pawson, Rev. J., d. 1806.
1794	Bristol	Hanby, Rev. Thomas, d. 1797.
1795	Manchester	Bradford, Rev. J., d. 1808.
1796	London	Taylor, Rev. T., d. 1816.
1797	Leeds	Coke, Rev. T., LL.D., d. 1814.
1798	Bristol	Benson, Rev. Jos., d. 1821.
1799	Manchester	Bradburn, Rev. S., d. 1816.
1800	London	Wood, Rev. James, d. 1840.
1801	Leeds	Pawson, Rev. John (1793).
1802	Bristol	Taylor Rev. Jos., d. 1830.
1803	Manchester	Bradford, Rev. Joseph (1795).
1804	London	Moore, Rev. H. (1823), d. 1844.
1805	Sheffield	Coke, Rev. Thomas, LL.D. (1797).

1806	Leeds	Clarke, Rev. Adam, d. 1832 (1814, 1822).
1807	Liverpool	Barber, Rev. J., d. 1816.
1808	Bristol	Wood, Rev. James (1800).
1809	Manchester	Taylor, Rev. Thomas (1796).
1810	London	Benson, Rev. Joseph (1798), d. 1821.
1811	Sheffield	Atmore, Rev. Charles, d. 1826.
1812	Leeds	Entwistle, Rev. Jos., d. 1841.
1813	Liverpool	Griffith, Rev. Walter, d. 1825.
1814	Bristol	Clarke, Rev. Adam, LL.D. (1806, 1822).
1815	Manchester	Barber, Rev. John (1807).
1816	London	Reece, Rev. Richard (1835), d. 1850.
1817	Sheffield	Gaulter, Rev. John, d. 1839.
1818	Leeds	Edmondson, Rev. Jon., M.A., d. 1842.
1819	Bristol	Crowther, Rev. Jon., d. 1824.
1820	Liverpool	Bunting, Rev. Dr. (1828, 1836, 1844), d. 1858.
1821	Manchester	Marsden, Rev. George (1831), d. 1858.
1822	London	Clarke, Rev. A., LL.D. (1806, 1814).
1823	Sheffield	Moore, Rev. Henry (1804).
1824	Leeds	Newton, Rev. Robert (1832, 1840, 1848), d. 1854.
1825	Bristol	Entwistle, Rev. Joseph (1812).
1826	Liverpool	Watson, Rev. Richard, d. 1833.
1827	Manchester	Stephens, Rev. John, d. 1841.
1828	London	Bunting, Rev. Dr. (1820, 1836, 1844).
1829	Sheffield	Townley, Rev. J., D.D., d. 1833.
1830	Leeds	Morley, Rev. George, d. 1843.
1831	Bristol	Marsden, Rev. George (1821).
1832	Liverpool	Newton, Rev. R. (1824, 1840, 1848).

1833	Manchester	Treffry, Rev. Richard, d. 1842.
1834	London	Taylor, Rev. J. (B.), d. 1845.
1835	Sheffield	Reece, Rev. Richard (1816).
1836	Birmingham	Bunting Rev. Dr. (1820, 1828, 1844).
1837	Leeds	Grindrod, Rev. E., d. 1842.
1838	Bristol	Jackson, Rev. T. (1849), d. 1873.
1839	Liverpool	Lessey, Rev. Theo., d. 1841.
1840	Newcastle-on-Tyne	Newton, Rev. Robert (1824, 1832, 1848).
1841	Manchester	Dixon, Rev. James, D.D., d. 1871
1842	London	Hannah, Rev. John, D.D. (1851), d. 1867.
1843	Sheffield	Scott, Rev. John (1852), d. 1868.
1844	Birmingham	Bunting, Rev. Dr. (1820, 1828, 1836).
1845	Leeds	Stanley, Rev. Jacob, d. 1850.
1846	Bristol	Atherton, Rev. W., d. 1850.
1847	Liverpool	Jackson, Rev. Samuel, d. 1861.
1848	Hull	Newton, Rev. R., D.D. (1824, 1832, 1840).
1849	Manchester	Jackson, Rev. Thomas (1838).
1850	London	Beecham, Rev. J., D.D., d. 1856.
1851	Newcastle-on-Tyne	Hannah, Rev. John, D.D. (1842).
1852	Sheffield	Scott, Rev. John (1843).
1853	Bradford	Lomas, Rev. John, d. 1877.
1854	Birmingham	Farrar, Rev. John (1870), d. 1884.
1855	Leeds	Keeling, Rev. Isaac, d. 1869.
1856	Bristol	Young, Rev. Robert, d. 1865.
1857	Liverpool	West, Rev. Francis A., d. 1869.
1858	Hull	Bowers, Rev. John, d. 1866.
1859	Manchester	Waddy, Rev. S. D., D.D., d. 1876.
1860	London	Stamp, Rev. W. W., D.D., d. 1877.
1861	Newcastle-on-Tyne	Rattenbury, Rev. John, d. 1879.

1862	Camborne	Prest, Rev. Charles, d. 1875.
1863	Sheffield	Osborn, Rev. George, D.D. (1881), d. 1891.
1864	Bradford	Thornton, Rev. William L., M.A., d. 1865.
1865	Birmingham	Shaw, Rev. William, d. 1872.
1866	Leeds	Arthur, Rev. William, M.A.
1867	Bristol	Bedford, Rev. John, d. 1879.
1868	Liverpool	Hall, Rev. Samuel R., d. 1876.
1869	Hull	Jobson, Rev. F. J., D.D., d. 1881.
1870	Burslem	Farrar, Rev. John (1854).
1871	Manchester	James, Rev. J. H., D.D., d. 1891.
1872	London	Wiseman, Rev. Luke H., M.A., d. 1875.
1873	Newcastle-on- Tyne	Perks, Rev. George T., M.A., d. 1877.
1874	Camborne	Punshon, Rev. W. M., LL.D., d. 1881.
1875	Sheffield	Smith, Rev. Gervase, D.D., d. 1882.
1876	Nottingham	M'Aulay, Rev. Alex., d. 1890.
1877	Bristol	Pope, Rev. William B., D.D.
1878	Bradford	Rigg, Rev. J. H., D.D.
1879	Birmingham	Gregory, Rev. Benjamin, D.D.
1880	London	Jenkins, Rev. E. E., LL.D.
1881	Liverpool	Osborn, Rev. George, D.D. (1863).

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